

THE
CHRISTIAN'S LOOKING-GLASS

OR THE
TIMOROUS SOUL'S GUIDE;

BEING
A DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK
OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT UPON THE HEART,

INTENDED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE DISCONSOLATE,

BY THE REV. T. PRIESTLEY.

SECOND EDITION.

"Lift up the Hands that hang down."

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TO THE
R E A D E R.

IN this little Treatise, it is my wish to aim particularly at the relief of those timorous souls, who, though Christ is precious to them, their hands hang down, and they wish themselves in the state of those who they apprehend can with the greatest assurance say, All is ours. The same enemy that tempts thousands to presume, who neither feel any thing of the worth of their own souls, or of that sweet communion with God, that will make them prefer heavenly pleasures to earthly—fills these with the fear of presuming, though they differ as much from the other as light from darkness.

It is my desire to prove to these, that nothing short of infinite love was the cause why Christ

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has ever been rendered thus precious in their eyes; and that they are more than welcome to appropriate a glorious Saviour, with all his benefits. A child is more than welcome to his father's table: these are the bruised reeds that shall not be broken; the lambs who have a right to the bosom of the Great Shepherd. The tender mother cannot look on an only child at the breast, even when in extreme pain, with that love and compassion Christ looks on such; and he that offends one of these, better were it for him to have a mill-stone tied about his neck, and be cast into the sea.

If it please the Great Head of the Church to crown this little piece with as much success as he has been pleased to honour my public labours for so many years, it will be of no small comfort to me, to be the happy instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit, in comforting those who are so dear to Christ.

How welcome would a flaming torch be to a traveller who had lost his way in a dark night, and found himself on some tremendous precipice, where he could not dare to venture
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one step more, lest he should be dashed to pieces! Or a traveller, who having a large forest to cross, of which he has heard the most dismal accounts of persons being torn with wild beasts in the night: Night comes on; he meets with divers ways, and knows not which to take; if he misses the one right way, he is ruined: In this perplexity, how welcome a safe guide! how fatal a false one! It is an infinite mercy to have the infallible Word for our light in this dark world; but though we have it in our hands, and the Holy Ghost, in an extraordinary manner, teaches some, yet his ordinary way is to use instruments in the comfort of his people. Christ could have in one moment relieved Paul, but he sends him to Annanias; he shall be the instrument for his comfort. One of the highest honours a mortal can have conferred on him, is in being employed by so glorious a Master, and in such important concerns. What were the honours of Nero to those of Paul? Though this little piece is particularly designed for the young scholars in the school of Christ, yet some graduates, I hope, will meet with something both instructing and entertaining. Infinite Wisdom appears in this;

that even one Minister's gifts shall edify another, and not any one should be possessed of all gifts: those are far from being the wisest, who are puffed up with their own infallibility.

The Word of God is the general dispensatory to which we apply, both for our comfort and others; no apothecary's warehouse is so well stored for a sick neighbourhood as this heavenly magazine: And I hope the comforting portion in this little piece is all fetched from thence, and also that I have not mistaken one herb for another; so if any should be poisoned by it, they have mixed something with it of their own. One thing I may venture to say that my reader will be convinced of, and that is, I have not wasted much paper, nor puzzled or taken up his time with enticing words of man's wisdom. I make no apologies for publishing, or pretend I was ever forced into this service by any. I have had sufficient reason to say of some who many years ago pressed me to appear in public, that they were neither the wisest, nor the best of men. Whatever we are doing in this lower world, is something or nothing as it relates to eternity. If a mortal
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could heap up treasures till they reached the moon, and engross all the honours of a whole world; if this is all, he dies a fool. What a man preaches is heard by few, and the sound is soon forgot; what he writes may reach thousands, and preach while the world stands.

It is my aim in this publication, that both now, and in ages to come, many timorous Christians shall, by reading it, be as much satisfied they see themselves Christians, as a man when he looks in a mirror is satisfied that it is himself he sees: though I am sensible this depends wholly upon the will and sovereignty of the Holy Ghost, who can instruct by what means he pleases.

For the Temple, some brought gold, some silver, and some brass: and he that was not rich enough to bring a bullock from the herd, might bring a sheep from the flock; and if poor, a bird. It is an eternal honour to bring but a handful of goats hair to such an infinitely glorious building, that shall stand for ever, when not a wreck shall be left behind of all the gaudy honours this world has got to shew. I hope
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this piece will be as welcome to the Great Head of the Church (who has long exercised compassion himself), as the crawling forth of Mephibosheth to meet and welcome David, who saw his friendly heart far more nimble than his heels. We serve the best of Masters, who always accepts of the will for the deed. That he may bless this to thy soul, Reader, is the prayer of

Thy Willing Servant,

T. P.

T H E

T H E

Christian's Looking-Glass.

BEING AN ESSAY ON JOHN, iii. 6.

THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH;
AND THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT
IS SPIRIT.

IT is a peculiar satisfaction to have information from one we know to be infallible, especially in such things as are out of the reach of any finite capacity. Though the effects of the new birth be evident, the cause and manner of it will be matter of eternal admiration. Who so qualified to speak on this subject as Christ himself, who knew what was in man by nature, and what he will be by grace?

That there have been men in every age, who are as different from the rest of the world as light from darkness: and this is not all—as different from what they themselves once were; and notwithstanding some who seem to be partakers

10 THE CHRISTIAN'S LOOKING-GLASS.

takers of this change, give sufficient proof they were never plants of our Heavenly Father's planting, but their goodness has been like the morning cloud and early dew; though this cannot fail to perplex many, it is of singular service, in as much as it puts them upon a more particular enquiry into what is nature, and what is grace: and as gold loses nothing by being tried, grace will appear to the Christian more genuine by being examined; and by this he will obtain a greater impresson of the importance of it.

It will be found by enquiry, that those changes which have nothing in them of a saving nature, differ in many things from those which have. There is nothing spiritual in the most refined Pharisee——water will rise no higher than the fountain. That which is born of the flesh will only be flesh; and being void of any will to change itself, will remain so: which makes it evident this change is wholly of God. *Who were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* Christ said to Peter, *Blessed art thou Simon-Barjona; flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father.*

It is no argument against this truth to say, it has been exploded by great and learned men in all ages; the scripture expressly declares, *Not many mighty, not many noble are called.* It not only argues ignorance, but a mind under the power of prejudice, to be opposing that which

which a man is wholly unacquainted with. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; 1 Cor. ii. 14.* If a man is determined to deny all he cannot comprehend, he may disbelieve the existence of the whole creation. If natural things are beyond the reach of men of the greatest attainments, how much more spiritual? The wisest philosopher is as unable to answer the question that may be asked about the most common things in creation, as he is to weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance.

The knowledge of this doctrine is of such infinite importance, that one would imagine every man who had read Christ's words, *Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,* would be engaged in the study of it. But we have the fullest proof, there are not any who will attend to it, but those who are under the influence of the Holy Spirit: such are made to feel the everlasting importance of the doctrine, and cannot content themselves with any thing short of an experimental knowledge of it.

The insensibility of the world at large proves the reality of this doctrine, and that there is a real difference between the people of God and the men of this world; and this is one reason why Christ always mentions his people as distinct from the world. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. John xvii. 16.*

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To see, in a satisfactory manner, that God has in this effectual way formed us for himself, will help us to conclude, that as Lazarus was raised from the dead to live and hold converse with Christ, we are to hold communion, not only with God here, but for ever hereafter. We are qualified for this communion with God by this change, in such a manner, that the most illiterate man, who has experienced this doctrine, is more qualified to know and enjoy God, than the wisest of natural men; as much more fitted for this converse with God, as a man of good sense is more capable of holding converse with men, more than any brute could possibly attain to.

Such an astonishing change, and revealed so particularly by the Holy Ghost, demonstrates the infinite design which God has in thus begetting a fallen creature again; then what great love those share of who are made partakers of it! What was the message God sent to Ahab, of giving him two great victories, though then great and necessary mercies, to the sending of the Holy Ghost into a man's heart? and by this, not only delivering him from the power of Satan, but fitting him for his service here, and glory hereafter.

If this was more distinctly seen and considered, we should be more deeply impressed with both the truth and importance of this subject; and should be more frequently in the frame the Apostle mentions, Col. i. 12. *giving thanks*

thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Even men that are of a deistical turn, find a difficulty in escaping the force of this truth, *i. e.* That God intended man to pay him more respect than the brute creation; though I cannot but from common observation take notice, that men in general seem no more disposed to do this than the brutal part of creation; and even the best among unregenerate men, may be referred to the ox that knows his owner, or to the ass who is conscious of his master's crib. Among unregenerate men, those who are receiving from the bountiful hand of God the largest portion of temporal things, are the farthest from gratitude and acknowledgment. Nothing is more easily to be discerned by the Christian, than that those who are in the flesh cannot please God: even though they may be reformed by education and other advantages, there remains in them an enmity against him; because *the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* Rom. viii. 7.

Where then is the dignity of human nature? It is not mentioned in the word of God—not mentioned in the creeds of the godly—nor to be found in the conduct of any of the fallen race towards God.

How then ought the Christian to consider the great design of God in this wonderful change

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made in him; and also particularly examine, that he may be as well satisfied that this change is wrought in him, as the heir of a large estate will diligently and carefully examine into the truth and reality of his heirship! It is by this a Christian is brought to say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* If we are dubious in this important matter, our gratitude, as well as our comfort, will be injured.

The nature of this subject is such, that full satisfaction in this one point is a perpetual ground of encouragement: *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* This is not like the riches of this world—less valuable at death: *If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.*

The more the Christian thinks on this truth, the more it will rise in his esteem: could I write upon this subject nothing but what has been wrote again and again, I have no reason to fear writing in vain; for reading the same truths, from different authors, confirms the faith of the believer, and enlarges his mind in this important subject.

It is an infinite mercy this doctrine is not only clearly revealed, but so particularly described, that those who give diligence may
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know whether they are made partakers of it or not. This does not only give present help to the Christian in discerning his state, but affords great advantage to those who wish to be instrumental in relieving poor distressed souls; and what is more evident, than that it was the design of God such should be comforted, seeing he has made such abundant provision for their relief?

In attempting to assist such to behold themselves in the glass of the Word, I would,

First, Make some remarks on that change which is made in the understanding by regeneration.

Secondly, Shew why such who are born of the Spirit, are said to be partakers of the Divine nature.

Thirdly, Give some reasons why this change is compared to a resurrection.

Fourthly, In what sense such may be said to have a new heart given them;—and answer the different objections which naturally arise in the mind of the Christian from each of these.

First, I am to make some remarks on that change which is made in the understanding by grace.

That which I wish particularly to aim at, is to demonstrate to the Christian himself the change made in his understanding, that it is such as is peculiar to a child of God, and that God is the sole author of it.

All those who are born of the Spirit, have their understandings enlightened in such a manner as distinguishes them from all the unregenerate in the world. While the world remains in darkness, these are the children of the light, and of the day. God has put an everlasting difference between them and the world.

This is not on account of any natural abilities they were ever possessed of. It is evident to a demonstration, many who are made partakers of spiritual wisdom, are far from being even equal to many of the men of the world in the knowledge of natural things; *for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.* Luke xvi. 8.

This is so far from being a disgrace to religion, Christ has thought proper to have it left on record, *Matt. xi. 25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth! because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* One reason may be given for this: that all who are thus taught of the Lord, may never ascribe any thing to themselves, but be humbled in the dust at the feet of their Redeemer, *who is made unto them wisdom, &c.*

God, who gives as a sovereign, gives to all his people such an ability to discern spiritual objects, which the wisest men in the world (in natural things) are totally strangers to: *For as the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, so the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit*

Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

This gift is a peculiar favour, and wholly undeserved, and is a positive pledge of their having been everlastingly loved. *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.* Matt. xiii. 11. This is that which has distinguished the people of God from the world in all ages. Many who partake of this astonishing free love, see nothing of the cause why their eyes are opened; and though so many around them are in worse than Egyptian darkness, they are not aware of the greatness of that cause which has made the difference, and therefore see little of the nature of it.

This kind of knowledge is infinitely superior to that which is merely natural; the one may justly be called darkness, the other light in the Lord. How dark must Ahitophel have been, notwithstanding his wisdom in worldly things! How different the understanding of David!

This is that kind of knowledge man in his fallen state is wholly incapable of. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

As there is a real natural inability in the eye to discern objects when the pupil is destroyed,

so the soul, in its fallen state, is incapacitated to understand things which are of a spiritual nature; and nothing less than that omnipotent voice that said, *Let there be LIGHT, and there was light* in the natural creation, can dispel the darkness, and shed abroad divine and heavenly light in the human soul.

It must be allowed, that the soul of an unregenerate man has an understanding faculty in natural things; but the conduct of the world at large contributes to demonstrate this doctrine, that all, by the fall, have as universally lost the power of discerning spiritually, as a man who once acted wisely proves he has lost his understanding when he acts the part of a madman. Such a part every man acts before regeneration; calling darkness light, and light darkness; good evil, and evil good.

When men are so blind and insensible that the greatest concerns they have to transact in this world are wholly unnoticed by them, it does not only prove that such are blind, but also the dreadful nature of that darkness which they are in, when the grand concerns of eternity are totally swallowed up in attending to the little trifles of time. How strikingly does it prove the absurd stupidity of the human heart, and also convinces any who do see, that no one can open the eyes of such, but that God who commands the light to shine out of darkness! For the loftiest flight that human REASON, assisted by the strongest wings of PHILOSOPHY, can

can soar, fall infinitely short of this great work, and leaves the mind, as to the things of God, dark as midnight itself.

A man that will lay down in a ship when sinking at sea, gives proof of his insensibility of the danger: so do all who are secure, and are living without concern on the brink of hell.

If all who are enlightened would more particularly consider the darkness they were once in, they would be more sensible that the change made in them could originate in none but God. This would be an effectual means to humble them, and prevent them from overlooking that infinite kindness which is manifested in bringing them from that darkness.

What evident proof do the wicked give of their darkness! The loudest calls do not alarm them; the most awful providences leave them as secure as ever; the kindest invitations are lost; neither the horrors of the damned, nor the crowns of the saved, will turn them from their sins. As a man without eyes passes by things both curious and dreadful, and neither admires the one, nor fears the other, so are these. The Scriptures therefore represent such as are lost, as blind; *the god of this world blinds the minds of them which believe not.* In this very situation were all those who now see: *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* Eph. v. 8.

Those who have shone as stars in the church, were, by nature, as dark and distant from
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saving knowledge as others; all the light and knowledge any have had, has all come from the same fountain of light—the light of the Gospel comes in upon some suddenly, on others more gradually, much as the light of the day approaches.

Who can describe the difference made in Saul, afterwards Paul the apostle? The day broke on him as sudden as lightning. How different must he feel, to have been one moment considering Christ the greatest of impostors, and in so small a space of time seeing him Lord of all! How would he look on the commission he had got from one of the vilest of men (the High Priest)! and with what pleasure would he engage himself to the best of Masters, and throw away that authority he once thought so highly of! Those very things which give us such pleasure when we are in the dark, we forsake with the utmost aversion when our eyes are open. Others who have been enlightened in a more gradual manner—the ideas they have of themselves, and their lost condition by nature—the knowledge they now have of Christ, and the need they see of an interest in him—are so different from what they once were, that they are convinced they were darkness itself, and saw nothing spiritual. Religion appears to them quite different; nay, the world itself, with all that it contains—the word of God now appears new, every doctrine and every promise. The Christian may say, he had heard of Christ by
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the hearing of the ear, but now by faith he beholds him. If he should have seen something of the Gospel before, he felt nothing of the real importance of it—he saw nothing savingly. He now, at times, can admire the astonishing love of God, which shines through the whole of the method of salvation, and see it is as real as his own existence. He is convinced now, that the very things which have so long filled the angels with adoration, were not so much as thought of by him. The incarnation of him who was in the form of God, and who really was the self-existing Jehovah—his being nailed to the cross, with all the blessings which the Gospel holds forth to sinners, were but as a root out of a dry ground: But now, what a sensible difference! He now experiences those things in all their glorious efficacy; he admires with angels; he rejoices and triumphs with saints. The pearl is now no longer hid; he has got an eye to see. This is the reason why those things which carried away his heart before conversion, have lost their influence over him; old things are not only passed away, but all things are become new.

The Christian may be very sensible he once was blind; if he could be as perfectly satisfied he now sees savingly, how would he rejoice with praise and thankfulness!—but there are many considerations which make him suspicious; so that he is afraid to come to this conclusion, that God has blessed him with eyes to see.

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Many fear their knowledge may be the effect of a good education, or other great advantages on account of natural and also acquired abilities; such are far from being confident God has begun a good work in them. To satisfy such that their light has come from the fountain of light, that it originated in the infinite and everlasting love of God; this would dispel all darkness. *What manner of love is this!* would then be the language of such.

To find one thing in us which assures us we are loved by a triune God, is preferable to the pleasures of a whole world, and makes all its troubles look little.

Those who are enlightened, are not aware how much their understandings differ from the unregenerate. Though they now delight in things they not only were ignorant of, but had an unconquerable enmity against every thing of the kind, they are not sufficiently impressed with the greatness of the change made in themselves; they are not easily persuaded that God should love them so as to teach them and make them effectually his children.

To comply with the truth, as a truth which the understanding may take in, when properly represented to it, is nothing more than what human nature is capable of in its depraved state. Thus, to assent to the whole Gospel, is not of itself a sufficient proof that such a soul is savingly wrought on by the Spirit of God. Many thus see the light, and endeavour to flee
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from it. Such are contented with the hearing of the ear, but do not see for themselves the grand things of God's salvation. But, to bring a man's heart to love the truth, and thirst after communion with the God of truth, proves to a demonstration, that such a disposition is of God.

*Devils believe, and tremble too ;
But Satan cannot love.* DR. WATTS.

A religion which has only something natural for its cause, will never raise the heart to that which is spiritual; the effect can never rise superior to the cause. What is of the earth, is earthly; what is of heaven, is heavenly; it favours of whence it came. But, speaking after the manner of men, when the cause is in the heart of God, it will draw the soul to that from whence it came. (O happy man, in whose heart is fixed one link of that glorious chain which hath its beginning in the heart of God!) And such do not only aim at being saved when they die, but at living in love and communion with God all their days; for this is the sum-total of blessedness on earth and in heaven. Many who have this very disposition, cannot distinctly discern it, and still live in suspicion of making a fatal mistake.

If the Christian could see that his understanding is illuminated in a saving manner, and that he could be no more the author of this than he could be the cause of his natural life, he must be obliged to conclude himself one of the
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the blessed of the Lord, as much as Simon Peter, to whom Christ said, *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father.*

If the means of grace could of themselves effect such a change, then we might expect all those who are of a pliable and obliging disposition would be very heavenly and spiritual: but experience teaches us the contrary. What numbers do we see remain stupid under the most lively means, though these apparently are the most promising; while others, from whom nothing could be expected, are called effectually, and give as evident proofs of their being called of God, as Lazarus did when he came from his grave! This makes it evident, it is not of the will of the flesh that any are called, but wholly of God.

Those who are the most perplexed, are generally such as are in earnest about their soul's concerns, by having their understandings opened to see the infinite importance of eternal things. Others, who are content with a mere profession, can go on their way without this anxiety: as they are in the dark, they fear not; they see not the precipice on which they stand, and consequently are not afraid of falling. The reason is obvious: the light of the worldly professor is never clouded, his sun is always up; what shall make him fear? He imagines his house stands strong: but, alas! it is built upon the sand; and when the storm of death arises,
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if sovereign grace prevent not, it will be swept away with a flood, and bury him in the ruins. But those who can be content with nothing less than beholding the high cause of their religion, experience many clouds intervening, which prevent the sight: they understand what the Psalmist meant when he said, *Thou hidest thy face, and I am troubled.*

There would be no such command given as that, to *lift up the hands which hang down*, if real Christians were not liable to be perplexed with doubts and fears: it is evident this has always been the case.

It has greatly increased the distress of many who have been long in the dark, suspecting that not any who have been beloved of God, have ever been in such a situation: these little think they are treading in the very footsteps of thousands who have gone before them. The way to Heaven lies through many dark paths; but Heaven is a bright world. We shall forget the darkness of the road, when we arrive at the kingdom of eternal day.

If those who are harrassed with this fear, were more acquainted with the experience of Christians, it might be a means of delivering them from such a groundless perplexity. If they could believe that others who are really the children of God, and loved by him, had been in the very same frame themselves, how much would it relieve them!

Some of the most eminent in the church of Christ, have spent many years in great perplexity, who have afterwards enjoyed as great consolation. The darkest nights sometimes are followed by the brightest mornings; and those who are favoured with strong consolations, are frequently tried with severe desertions. It often is the case, that long and awful desertions precede seasons of long continued joy and comfort.

The great Dr. Owen was three years in such distress as few ever experienced, yet not many had more solid pleasure than he had to the end of his life.

It is generally the case, when the Christian has been particularly earnest in the use of means, and meets with no success, his distress increases, and his conclusions are more and more gloomy; he is apt to conclude, God neither has, nor ever will hear his prayer: but this is most wretched unbelief. O Christian! it is as dishonourable to thy God, as painful and afflicting to thee.

We generally take delays for denials: this has caused many an heavy hour under these heavens, and has almost sunk the spirits of some, even when God has been about to grant the very mercy so earnestly sought for.

The Christian is not aware how his love is all this while drawn out more and more by the delay of the very comfort he is so earnest about;
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and that the design of God in permitting this darkness to be so long, was for this very purpose: so that which fills him with suspicions, is working his good, his joy and comfort in the end.

When a man loves the company of his friend, he will go where he hopes to meet him; if the distance renders this improbable, how glad is he to hear by letter! And why? Because he loves him. So the Christian would not think the way long, could he but meet with the beloved of his soul. There would be none of these desires, if he had no love. It is love which is the cause why absence is so painful. How many are looking and impatiently waiting for something, which they have in themselves all the time!

Could Jacob doubt of his love to Joseph, when he heard of his being alive, ~~and was~~ impatient to see him? Was the believer but sensible it is real love which is the cause of his thus seeking after Christ, he would not doubt about his state. Why is he thus desirous of being loved by Christ? Is this common to men? Was it always the case with himself? That which is the cause of all that love to God there is in this world, must be the reason why any ever thus sought the Lord.

Who but a real Christian could ever pray such a prayer as that in Solomon's Song, viii. 6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy*

is cruel as the grave. None but a real lover of Christ could ever pray thus.

To have those desires in us which nothing but God can satisfy, evidences a religion as much above that which is natural, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Why then should the Christian dread his religion, as springing from that which is merely natural? What could cause such a frame in a soul which was by nature dark, and saw nothing lovely in God, and was dead to all things spiritual, but that God who has in every age been forming some of the fallen race for his praise? The devil would not; the world, with all its sorrows and difficulties, cannot bring a soul into this frame: however dark such a soul may be, distinguishing love is the cause.

If such as are satisfied in themselves about their interest in Christ, had more enlarged ideas of the first cause of their religion, it would fill them with gratitude. Those who are arrived in the heavenly world, have not a higher cause of their being there to contemplate, than we have here below. There can be no higher an origin than the infinite and everlasting love of God.

The dealings of God with his people, differ widely from the ways of creatures. Those we love, we fly to relieve; they shall not drop one tear, if we can prevent it. Infinite wisdom, however, sees proper that those who are dear and beloved, should sometimes sow long in tears; but

but such are sure to reap in joy in the issue: For, He afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men, but for some wise and important end; in his own time, he will fill those with all his fulness. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

One would imagine, from the great change grace makes in the heart, that those who really experience it, could not but conclude that the work was saving. There is a wide difference between a man who has an aversion to the things of God, and one who sees the whole world to be emptiness and vanity, without being made a real partaker of these things. The one grudges every moment which he is, on any account, obliged to devote to religion; he neither seeks nor wants any comfort in it: The other follows it with his whole heart; assure him that he shall obtain his salvation, and how much would he prefer this to all the world! And what can this be ascribed to, but to the real change God has graciously made in him? The one walks over the greatest treasures, and is so blind he is no way apprehensive of any value being there; the other has got his eyes opened in such a manner, that he is fully convinced, if he may but partake of this treasure, he is rich for ever. There is a peculiar satisfaction arising from the idea of the infinite love of God being the sole cause why we differ from the world.

To obtain this satisfaction, the Christian must particularly consider the darkness of his own

mind before he was enlightened, and also the insensibility which is easy to be discerned in some who have had the same advantages with himself, and remain unregenerate. He must call to mind, he once was ignorant of his own state, and, so far from having the least desire after the things of God, that he fled from the light—it was disgustful and disagreeable to him.

As the observing Christian will not require much persuading there has been a change made in himself, if the effect of this be agreeable to the word of God, he need not suspect its being of a saving nature. If he is brought to see all his righteousness as filthy rags, and led to depend wholly on that righteousness which is of God by faith; if his desires are now to walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; if he now, as a new born babe, desires the sincere milk of the word, he will find his own picture described in the word, and may read it to the joy of his heart.

A man who is thoroughly acquainted with the laws of England, may be perfectly satisfied he sees more of the nature of it than a thousand novices; and it would be great folly in him to suspect that he sees not beyond those who are buried in ignorance. So it is evident, God has so described nature and grace in the word, that the diligent Christian may not only be persuaded he sees the nature of the Gospel, but that he has felt its power upon his own soul; and that

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as he once could live in the neglect of it, it is now more to him than his necessary food.

The doubting Christian may find many objections occasioned by his remaining ignorance, which may attack him in different forms. Sometimes he may fear, if the knowledge he has had been given him in special love, he should have had more of the light of God's countenance with it. This objection is very common, but it is often occasioned by the person's own neglect of the means of grace. If Christians neglected their bodies, as they frequently do their souls, they would soon complain of pain and sickness.

It would argue great ignorance, to say we are not alive, because we are indisposed; the very desire of the light of God's countenance is a positive proof of the soul's being renewed; the being denied this pleasure, is the reason why we hear from it such fears and complaints. Those who are not alive to God, are silent about these things; they neither love to talk or think of such things, and feel a hatred against those who do.

Wherever this is the objection, it is one of the most pleasing kind, as it proves such a soul is like David, Psalm xlii. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* It is only the living who can complain in this manner. Let all such wait patiently;

patiently ; he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Many who are now in heaven have, in this dark lane, cried out, *Lord! how long wilt thou hide thy face?* but light is sure to come in God's time. The ways of God are a great deep ; some shall be filled with joy, and others on the very brink of despair ; both are equally dear to God ; the weeping child is as much a child as the rejoicing one, and as much regarded by the Father.

God's bruised reeds make a melody which is heard even in heaven, and has as much the notice and attention of Jehovah as the praise of archangels. The very tears of such are bottled, and their very fears are even working together for their good. Let such bless the name of the Lord that they cannot sit down contented with a form, without the power.

How different the language of a man naturally enlightened ! he will never complain of the hidings of God's face—will never say, *I sought him, but I found him not* ; he is both ignorant of the pleasures of religion, and the plague of his own heart.

But the Christian who makes this objection, is wholly different ; his light is not common ; by special and saving grace, he can no more sit down and rest in a form of godliness, than a hungry man can content himself with seeing a well-spread table which he is debarred from partaking of : therefore, want of knowledge, not of grace, is the cause of his complaint.

Some

Some are greatly alarmed on this account ; they cannot remember any particular time when God wrought this great work on them ; and their fears are much increased, when they hear others who are able to describe all the particulars about their conversion. Though those who are able to tell the precise time, may derive some advantage by it, yet none of these would be satisfied with having experienced any extraordinary change at a particular time, if the effects of such a change were not agreeable to the word of God. Sāul, afterwards King Saul, might remember a great change, and the time of it ; but the consequences proved it to be no saving one : therefore it is no argument of great wisdom, to depend much upon the knowledge of the precise time.

Light sometimes comes in as the day ; we do not say it is not day because it came in gradually : the revelation of God's salvation to sinners was given not at once, but by gradual and flow degrees ; so it is often in grace.

Those who have been privileged with a good education, and have been kept from open sin, seldom can tell in so particular a manner as others who have been brought up in sin and darkness. A good education may inform the judgment ; but the will and affections will never make choice of and delight in God in Christ, but by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. Let such as are perplexed with this fear, remember it is not so much how the light came,

as what they are brought to see by this light. This objection, however, is not easily removed; we are always more ready to lend an ear to what mortals say, than we are to attend to the word of God.

I remember, in the beginning of my ministry, to have heard one man, in giving in an account of his experience, speak to this purpose: That no man under heaven stood in greater need of the blood of Christ to wash away his sins, nor any saw more the insufficiency of his own righteousness, or fled more entirely to the righteousness of Christ held out in the Gospel. The man had no equal in that neighbourhood, for temper and conduct, before his change, and the light came into his mind very gradually.

God works as a sovereign: some, when they are sayingly called, are a long time before they are led to see into the doctrines of the Gospel; others are taught them in a small space of time. So, in his first beginning to work upon the soul, though many can tell the time and manner of the Lord's calling them; yet some, upon reflection, will remember such particular seasons when they have had remarkable impressions, which sometimes makes it difficult to conclude when the real change took place. Few but can remember particular times of comfort, when they could, like Jacob, call the place a Bethel; and all can remember their times of darkness and barrenness, when their language
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has been, *Oh that I were as in months past!*
Job xxix. 2.

That light which causes the soul to delight in God, or desire the enjoyment of him before all the things of time—which enables him to see into the word, and with pleasure study the contents of it—must be of a saving nature, however the Christian may be dissatisfied about not discerning when God called him: and this differs from that kind of knowledge called head knowledge, which affects the head only; this reaches the heart.

Why does the believer love and follow after this light? He follows on to know the Lord, both in public and private: others, who are ignorant, wonder he is not weary; but they feel not how his heart is enlarged, by divine grace, to run in the ways of God's commands. Why does his soul cleave to things he once had an aversion to? Because he is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The light, however, that has come into his mind, proves itself to be the sovereign and saving teachings of the Holy Spirit of God. Could such see themselves in the glass of the word of God, they would, instead of spending their time in suspicions about their state, be employed in giving thanks to Him who has commanded the light to shine into their hearts.

Many have been much harrassed with this fear; if they had been enlightened in a saving manner,

manner, they should have shared of gifts equal with others, and would have had as competent a knowledge of divine things ; whereas they are sensible many far exceed them.

When such as these have heard a person pray very fluently, they have gone into some corner by themselves, and there drawn the most gloomy conclusions. Few are aware what advantage Satan, the cunning adversary, takes by such things as these to rob the believer of all his comfort. This has not been on account of their having an aversion to prayer, or to any having great liberty in prayer ; but they see they have so small a gift themselves, they fear they were never made partakers of a spirit of prayer and supplication.

Satan understands well how to distress a soul in this case ; if he cannot keep persons in total darkness, he would hide from their eyes what God has in infinite mercy wrought for them : but let such remember, that prayer doth not consist in the multiplicity of words, or elegance of expression ; but in the sincerity and intense desires of the heart, offered up to God by faith in Christ Jesus.

It is not the quantity of knowledge or gifts, but the quality, that ought to be enquired into. Some have great knowledge, who have not even the appearance of grace ; some also have remarkable gifts, who are total strangers to a work of grace on their hearts. The humble spirit which appears in this objection, is not to

be found in hypocrites ; such are puffed up with their attainments, and are never to be found in this frame. We may as soon expect to find grapes on thorns, as this frame in any but those whom God hath savingly changed.

Many who make this very objection, are eminent for living in the fear of God, and oftentimes more uniformly adorn the Gospel than some who have large gifts, though they are real Christians. It has been observed, those who stumble, and bring a scandal on the Gospel, are for the most part persons of great gifts.

I would advise such as are perplexed with this objection, to look more at the effects of their knowledge, than the extent of it : it is no bad sign to see the heart better than the head. A wise parent loves not to see the head of a child grow too fast ; and such are seldom ornaments in the family of God, who have so far exceeded their brethren in gifts : these, like ships which have got more sail than ballast, often split on the rock of spiritual pride. Many precious souls are humbled in the dust, when they see others whom they imagine so far exceed themselves ; when at the same time, could such see those very persons as they really are, they would be a terror unto them.

If, believer, the Lord has given thee this gift, to lay at the footstool of free grace, and feel thyself less than the least of all saints before him ; if he has given thee eyes to see thy own nothingness, and is enabling thee to see more

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and more of the excellency of the Lord Jesus, he has done great things for thee; he hath done more for thee than if he had given thee ten millions of worlds. The valley of humiliation is a safe, a holy, and a happy place; pray to be kept there while thou livest. Never measure the nature of thy gifts or knowledge by others, but by the word of God: if thy knowledge is of the right kind, it will make thee thirst for more; thou wilt have a spirit opposite to that which is of the world: those who are of the world, desire not the knowledge of the ways of God; thine will cause thee to hear the word with a sincere desire to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. If thy gift in prayer be but small, thy prayer will be the language of thy heart, a frame of mind no hypocrite ever knew. Many prayers which are admired by men, are an abomination in the eyes of God. God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth: he pays no attention to fine speeches, and eloquent addresses, that merely flow from the lip; but a sigh from a contrite spirit, a groan from a broken heart, pierces the clouds, reaches the ear, and penetrates the heart of Jehovah.

There are some who fear that all their knowledge will prove spurious, because they never had such a law-work as they hear some others have had. Measuring ourselves by others, and overlooking the word of God, has been a common mistake. Many of Zion's travellers have
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been alarmed by this folly, and created to themselves many an hour's sorrow.

The remarkable Daniel Burgefs, in answering this objection, fays, "The farmer never finds fault with his ploughman for not having plowed the ground fufficiently deep, if his corn do but grow well." Says he to the doubting foul, "Look more at the corn, and lefs at the plough." How many, when they have heard of fome having had great terrors, have for a time thrown away all the comforts they have ever received!

The great Mr. Livingfton was fo much in this fituation, that though God had owned his miniftry with fuch fuccefs as few ever knew, yet, finding many to whom God had bleffed his labours who endured a great deal of terror, he began to fear that he himfelf had been deceived. He prayed that God would make him to experience that terror others went through; and he relates, in his account of his experience, that he had for one half-hour fuch horror of mind, that he thought, had he continued one half-hour longer in that frame, it would have put an end to his exiftence. He never afterwards prayed to experience terror, and was convinced he had finned in fo doing.

Be not fo much concerned about a law-work, if thou art brought to fee Chrift is the end of the law, and haft not the leaft expectation of falvation by it, and at the fame time not the leaft objection to any part of it; but canft from

thy heart say, I delight in the law of God after the inner man, and approve the commandment, as holy, and just, and good. Those generally are the most harrassed with the law, who by their education have been trained up with expectations of being saved by their imaginary good works; others, who have had an education wholly different, seldom experience such terror, though they are as much brought off from the law as a covenant of works, as those who have had the most terror.

While the soul is looking to the law for salvation, there is a necessity the law should be set home. Paul was looking for salvation by it, therefore it was applied with power; but many who are trained up under the gospel, did never expect salvation by it: these, when they are savingly called, seldom have any such terror as those who have had no advantages; they oftentimes have great distress, but it arises from a different quarter.

Nothing is more common than for those who have had great terror by the law, to look on none to be Christians, but those who have gone through the same terrors they themselves have experienced.

It is not uncommon to meet with some, who think if they had the Holy Spirit for their teacher, they should have made greater progress, having had so many advantages. They read, that those who are planted in the house of the Lord, shall grow and flourish in the courts
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of our God; and fear they see nothing of this in themselves, though frequently such are seeing more and more into their own emptiness, and also into the fulness which is in Christ; *a sure sign of growing*. It is a pleasing circumstance to meet with a person thirsting after greater attainments; and as carnal security and insensibility is the common badge of the hypocrite, such complaints as these are never made by them. This fear is not uncommon among the truly gracious; it has kept many as in chains of bondage.

Those who are perplexed with this fear, may be satisfied, if God had left them to delude themselves with a false religion, they would have been strangers to such a frame. Foolish virgins are wholly ignorant of it; their lamp is never searched into, to see whether there is oil or not. Some are making great improvements, and are not sensible of it. Sometimes those very things which alarm and distress, and make the believer fear he has no grace at all, are difficulties permitted on purpose to make him shine in grace, and be more and more rooted and grounded in love. Those very temptations and trying dispensations which make him find his strength perfect in weakness, as Paul experienced, will enlarge his mind both in the knowledge of himself and Christ.

No man, who had not grace, was ever concerned about growing in grace; it is only the

real believer, who wishes to improve every talent.

Many sincere souls have been greatly distressed, fearing the change they have experienced has been only occasioned by those convictions which many hypocrites may have. That there have been many who have had strong convictions, and who have been for a time reformed by these, is very evident; and for a short time they may deceive many, nay may exceed many real Christians in zeal and appearance; but these, having no spiritual principle, are only moved by those impressions which go off again, and leave the soul as destitute of desires after God and spiritual things, as the most carnal in the world. When the spirit of God convinces the the soul of sin, he never stops there, but goes on to convince of righteousness and judgment. Wherever he wounds, in due time he pours in the healing unction of the blood of Christ, and divine consolation.

Many scrupulous persons are long followed with this suspicion, which causes them to overlook many of those times of refreshing with which God has been pleased to favour them.

Those very fears, to the real Christian, work for good; and indeed only such are harrassed by them: his very fears of being wrong, will make him examine particularly; his knowledge will be enlarged thereby: though those who are under the influence of common convictions appear to go far, and at first, in appearance,

pearance, even exceed the real believer, as our Lord intimates in the parable of the sower: The seed which fell on the stony ground soon sprung up, but having no root, soon withered away; they then either settle in a form, or turn back like a dog to his vomit.

An hypocrite never, no, not for one half-hour, felt his soul charmed and delighted with the glories and excellencies of the person and offices of the Lord Jesus. It is the Spirit of God alone, that can glorify Christ in the heart; this he does in saints only.

There is a religion which is natural, whereby a man assents to the truth in general; but at the same time totally denies the power of it, nay hates even so much as to hear any thing of the power of real godliness.

Many considerations unite in keeping such from open sin; and, above all these, Satan has a peculiar hand in their security, he tempts them not as he does others; they are fast asleep already, and he cannot be more secure of them than he is. The self-righteous Pharisee is not one step nearer heaven than the profane sinner; but those who stagger the Christian, appear more like those who are savingly called, than mere formal professors. There is something on them more than restraint; they receive the word with joy; they for a while are carried away with religion. This is something more than escaping the pollution that is in the world through lusts: their affections appear engaged in

in religion. All this may be, and the change not saving; it may be but a common work upon the conscience, and on the natural passions. While the conviction abides on the conscience, the news of a pardon cannot but be agreeable to such; but as soon as ever the conviction goes off, they desire neither pardon, nor any other spiritual enjoyment, and therefore go on living, and perhaps dying, unpardoned, unforgiven after all. One thing wherein the real Christian differs from these, is, the renewed principle wrought in him by regeneration abides in him, and causes him to desire both the knowledge and enjoyment of all spiritual things; He cannot stop short of pardon and peace; and he never rests till the great secret of salvation is revealed to him by the witnessing Spirit of God, and then he rests in peace in the sweet bosom of his Saviour. When the other is drawn back by the world, the true Christian's change being in his heart, not merely in his conscience, the world is no longer his element; all that is in it, cannot satisfy that craving he has now in his soul, after divine, spiritual, and heavenly objects.

The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, has roused the fears of many: *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, &c.* Heb. vi. 4—6. It is very easy
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to know what is meant by *those who were once enlightened*. Even the common light of the Gospel brings the natural man a light others have not, who never heard of it. How dark was the Heathen world! How dark is the Mahometan, Jewish, and Papal world, who have not the light of the Gospel!

By the preaching of the Gospel, such things are presented to the understanding of a man, concerning which he was wholly in the dark before, and with such evidence of their being true, that he cannot resist the force of that truth. So we read in the 2d epistle of Peter, ii. 21. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* It was delivered to them in so clear and powerful a manner, that their judgment could not but gain some information; but their will and affections being unrenewed, their profession of the Gospel could not be abiding.

This is a great aggravation of the sin of those who fall away. They are enlightened by the truth, and know the will of their Master, but do it not. What numbers of such are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! But when the Holy Spirit of God sheds his divine light on the understanding, he renovates the will to embrace, and the affections to delight in the great things of God. Holiness is the happiness of such a soul.

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The common light of the Gospel itself, oftentimes, for a while, will reform a man, tho' he is not renewed by it. It may for a time influence the moral conduct, but it will never change the heart. It is not the voice of man, but the power of God must do that.

But some, in a more particular manner, taste of the good word of God. These are more like the real Christian, and on that account make the believer fear being deceived. The word signifies tasting a thing, to try whether it is agreeable or not. *O taste and see that the Lord is good!* Pf. xxxiv. 8. These, when under conviction, taste, and seem to relish those parts of the word which suit their case, such as promises of pardon to the chief of sinners; but having no renewed principle, they never are led to seek these manifestations of God's love, which those follow after who are savingly wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. All their concern is to escape hell; which makes it evident how different such are from those who really taste that the Lord is gracious!

The Lord gives to his own, some such refreshing times from his presence, which causes them to sit down under the apple-tree of his Gospel with great delight, and to esteem the world, and its highest gratifications, as less than nothing and vanity. These seek for the Spirit of God to witness with their spirits, and have something more in pursuit than fleeing from the
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wrath to come. These seek the sanctification of their natures, and the enjoyment of God in time and eternity. The taste these have, does not leave them like the morning cloud.

The false professor never had any real love to the things of God, but follows religion merely as a sick man takes physic, because he thinks death will be the consequence if he neglect it; therefore, as soon as his fright is over, which his sickness was the sole cause of, he wants no more medicine. Just so do those treat divine things who are only alarmed by common convictions; when these go off, their religion is gone as the dew.

Under those impressions they have no affection to the people of God; the motive that brings such in among them, is not love, or any real liking to their spirit and manner of living; so that as soon as these impressions go off, they frequently imbibe a greater degree of hatred against real Christians, than those who never had any such convictions, and, if possible, will find some excuse from their failings for deserting them. The evangelist John, in his epistle, mentions some such as these: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* 1 John, ii. 19. They generally make it sufficiently appear, when they join the world again, that they never were of God's family.

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There is a peculiar spirit given to those who are plants of the Lord's planting, though it may be a long time before they receive comfort. They cleave to those who drink in the spirit of the Gospel; they find no rest in the world; they feel themselves no longer of the spirit of it; and are very sensible, if they never find the comfort they are seeking after, they never can find it in any thing but religion. The taste these have, will never permit them to entertain one thought of leaving the people of God.

Those who fall away, have sometimes greater impressions of the worth of everlasting things, than those who are savingly called; which may be called tasting of the powers of the world to come. These impressions make them for a season tremble like Felix; but they are soon gone, and never make any change in the disposition. The greatest terrors, if alone, will not make any saving change in human nature.

These, never having felt any pleasures superior to those they have had in sin, are soon drawn back again, and neither seek the knowledge of God or his ways.

But the real Christian is wholly different: the frame of his heart is changed; he can no longer feed on husks; he will hearken to no voice but that of the Great Shepherd. All the carnal men in the world cannot draw him from that happiness he is now in pursuit of. He looks on the case of those who draw back, to be, above all others, miserable. If he find not to his
satisfaction,

fatisfaction, like Hannah, he will continue seeking with a sad countenance.

Such need not fear their religion being only the effect of common conviction ; though they may be compared to the bruised reed and smoking flax, they shall neither be broken nor quenched. He that hath begun so good a work, will carry it on ; and though such may sow long in tears, they shall reap in joy in the issue.

It is a great thing to be satisfied that the light we have received by the Gospel is of a saving nature, such as no hypocrite in the world ever had. There is an absolute necessity of being convinced we experience something superior to all these ; and of being fully persuaded, that our calling was *not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*, in order to have a sense of distinguishing love impressed on our hearts. By this the believer's mind will be enriched with those ideas of God, which will confirm him more and more.

The more distinctly the Christian discerns that the means of grace, of themselves, will not give saving light to the understanding, and grace to the heart ; the more he perceives the immediate power of God in those who are called, and how personally such must be loved ; and at the same time drinks of those streams of living water, which come from a rock more to be admired than that in the wilderness : And what is more evident, than that the most powerful arguments, though arranged in the very best

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manner,

manner, and delivered by one of the most pungent preachers, even one who travails in birth again over immortal souls, will no more bring a dead soul to life, than the same means used would bring a dead body from the grave? This proves what a real change God has made in those who are truly regenerated, and that the hand of God is peculiarly in this change.

This doctrine is very comfortable to those who are convinced that the change wrought on themselves could not possibly come from any inferior cause, but from the almighty power and love of God; which Paul mentions, Eph. ii. 4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.* Those have a very shallow idea of the infinite importance of this mercy, if they do not particularly view the great cause. Much of the believer's comfort will arise from being clear in this point; it tends to impress his heart with a sense of the eye of God being continually on him: for, on what will he look, under the heavens, with so much delight, as on those he has thus loved? And to be so regarded and noticed by a covenant God, affords a more pleasing reflection than is to be expressed.

Such astonishing love calls loudly for our attention and gratitude. Is it not to be lamented, that God should bestow such infinite favours, and those who partake of such great things should live so insensible of them? So
much

much so, that the greatest things in salvation are overlooked. Let it be observed, this is not a gift for a moment, but of an everlasting nature; the understanding will never be dark as it was before this change, nor the soul be ever in a state of condemnation again.

That divine work which is wrought in the poor soul, may be called that which is born of the Spirit, the real effects of the creating power of the Holy Ghost upon the soul. It is a superior work to that which only restrains a man from sin; for by this a man is possessed of a new nature, which the carnal and unregenerate world is ignorant of. This is not like the morning cloud and early dew; this seed will remain in the Christian to the end; it is a plant of the Father's planting, which shall never be plucked up.

To be perfectly satisfied that he who has been giving this great gift in all ages, has actually bestowed it on us, and that we have now an understanding superior to any mere natural man whatever, will make us at times say, *Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?* and we shall feel compassion for those who are in the dark, being sensible who it is that has made us to differ.

It is of no weight that some men of the brightest capacities, have held this doctrine in contempt; for such, though wise in natural things, prove themselves to be totally unacquainted with spiritual things: *For you see your*
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calling,

calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27.

The carnal man may be wise in worldly things; yet how foolishly do they act, who give all they are possessed of for a building which stands within the reach of the sea, and which must of consequence be soon washed away! So weak are the wisest of men, all they build their comfort upon is within the flood-mark of the changes of this world. Those who act in so unwise a manner in the chief concerns they have under the sun, prove how great their folly must be.

The religion such men have, arises from common notions, which are to be found in the most inconsiderate at times; *i. e.* that time is short, and that eternity must be of great importance.

But those whose hearts are changed by grace, see a pleasure in religion superior to any this world can pretend to. Such, by observation, may find their regard to the things of God is not occasioned by the consideration of death being awful, and eternal things of such vast importance; but on account of the understanding being so enlightened, that they discern there is a higher happiness to be enjoyed in religion than can possibly be had in any thing temporal.

That religion must be true that springs purely from choice, and which is the element the
soul

soul can only find real pleasure in. While slavish fear is the ruling motive in the heart, the Christian will be suspicious; but when he is satisfied the ways of religion are the delight of his soul, his fears will subside.

Fear and terror may for a season cause a man to appear as if his motives were heavenly and spiritual; but religion which comes from no higher a cause than this, will soon vanish, and leave a man worse than he was before. The folly of human nature being only bridled by fear and dread, when these obstructions are gone, the stream of corruption and sin runs with more rapidity than before.

If carnal persons, who are under convictions from some inferior cause, begin to go along, and for a while keep pace with such as are truly religious; yet these, having no understanding to apprehend the worth of Christ, and the importance of everlasting things, when their impressions wear off, they will soon tire; and such will continually esteem religion as that in which they can promise themselves no present pleasure. It is not any real present pleasure they ever sought in it, but merely to escape that wrath which they feared.

How different the Christian!—He as much wants that refreshing which comes from the presence of the Lord, as thirsty Israel did the water from the rock. The true Christian is convinced more and more of the infinite importance of the things of God; and is fully

persuaded there are no pleasures to be compared with those of religion.

This proves the great difference between a saving work of the Spirit of God, and that religion which has no higher a cause than terror and common convictions. And when this is clearly discerned, it is a great advantage to the Christian, and proves to himself his religion arises from a right cause.

Those, therefore, who see others fall from their profession, may find by experience, that the religion they have is of a different nature, and are only more thoroughly confirmed by these awful changes. Peter was not shaken by the numbers who left Christ: he said, *To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!* He found a pleasure in Christ, which all the world beside could not afford him.

The minds of Christians would be greatly relieved, if they could see, in a more distinct manner, how widely those differ; and even that which may be discovered in the falling away of such, would only tend to make them love religion more: For, not only the way of the world at large, but particularly the spirit of these men, proves to the Christian, that there is no living a spiritual life, without having a new nature.

Nothing is more common than for creatures to act according to their kind; and this not from any outward cause, but from that innate principle which God hath placed in them. So,
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in this astonishing change, those who are savingly called, will act according to that nature they are now made partakers of. As the young fish will act according to its kind, and every other animal; so, he who partakes of a new nature, will find himself following the footsteps of the flock.

By this saving change, the soul is as really disposed to live on spiritual things, as, before regeneration, it had only a desire after carnal things; and this is not caused by any thing outward, but by that principle God hath, in regeneration, planted in the soul. Tempt such to turn their backs on religion, and take up worldly things for their pleasure, they will feel a reluctance: the company and pleasures which formerly were great snares, have no charms now; the renewed soul turns from them, to seek those pleasures which are peculiar to itself. Though such oftentimes fear they have no true religion, and cannot come at that comfort in it they could wish, yet they will not admit the thought of abandoning religion for the world. They have now got something in themselves, which nothing under Heaven will satisfy, but God himself: by these things a man may prove himself, and come to a knowledge of his state. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. The word of God is evidently fulfilled in all that are truly

truly regenerated, *they that are born of the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit.* Others, who are only born of the flesh, will have no higher pleasures than those which spring from carnal things; the checks they have from natural conscience, make no change in the habit of the soul; we shall as soon find figs growing on thorns, and grapes on thistles, as those following religion for their happiness and comfort in this world. The darkness of the understanding is not instantly removed; the Holy Ghost, in his sovereign way, leads on the soul gradually to see spiritual things.

But this light makes advances, like the light of reason: as we advance in years, so the mind of the Christian opens, to discern the things of God.

This has been one cause why many Christians have been more perplexed with some things in Christianity, which they found no difficulty in at their first setting out.

Where there is a growing in grace and knowledge, there will be an increasing desire to see more clearly into all divine truth, and a greater sensibility of the necessity of the assistance of the Holy Ghost to open the understanding.

It has been particularly owing to this, that many who have made some progress, and got before others of their fellow-travellers, have been at times particularly exercised with difficulties,

culties, which they had not the least idea of; nor do they see others tried with the same.

When they have been particularly considering how to approach God, and what ideas they suppose those have who draw near in faith and love, under a proper impression that they are loved infinitely, and that from everlasting; they find by experience, this is scarce so much as thought of by themselves, and that their minds wander, and their apprehensions of God are very confused and dark: though they profess to believe, that he who is God in their nature, is as really appearing for them as a high priest in Heaven, as that he once was nailed to the cross; yet they find, though they fully assent unto it as a truth, they make little use of this truth in those very moments when they ought, in prayer. All their plea, and all their confidence and boldness, ought to be through the faith of it.

Such must know, if a worshipper in the typical worship did not keep his eye to the end and design of God in those types, he worshipped not in spirit; nor does the Christian, when his mind is not at all led to spiritual things.

As a sailor in a storm is supposed to use all the skill he is master of, so should a Christian on his knees. All his light and knowledge ought to be in full exercise. It is not the multitude of our words, but how our minds lay hold on an invisible God. Many have been taken up with their own voice, manner, and words, and especially

cially in public, when the mind has been at all engaged.

Many have found such darkness and defect in their light, as to make them suspect whether they have been taught savingly or not; yet this sense of remaining darkness proves that such do see, and also more than some who are really taught of God. Many are not aware of their imperfections.

A man who went to worship in the temple, and understood the particulars of that worship, and what God intended to hold forth by the different things in it, had something outward to help his senses; and this assisted him to bring his mind into exercise: But our worship is purely spiritual; and having Christ, a real Christ, crucified, and in office too, to view by faith—this is more than all the types in the temple put together: but if the mind is not led to him by the Holy Spirit, wandering and want of faith must be the consequence. And as the Holy Ghost is a sovereign, his influences cannot be commanded by men. He, like the wind, to which our Lord compares him, breathes when and where he pleases.

Thus many who have had both real and great comfort in prayer, may be brought into such a perplexed situation as to fear it has all been a delusion, and that Satan has been transforming himself into an angel of light in order to deceive them.

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This has also been frequently the case with many at the Lord's table. Their minds have been so much beclouded, they have feared the Holy Ghost had never taught them in any saving manner.

Such fears to me appear very promising, and prove that the Holy Spirit is leading such a soul into the great things of Christianity.

It is such feelings as these which make the timorous soul run to the word, to see if any help can be found there; while the believer has his mind wholly taken up with the general doctrines of the Gospel. He may see those so clear and distinct, as to be puffed up with high notions of his own attainments; but this is the fault of his corrupt nature. A little knowledge puffeth up, but great knowledge lays the soul low. Paul saw so much of divine things, as forced him to acknowledge, *he knew but in part.* I Cor. xiii. 12.

In this view, when he comes more particularly to examine how his mind is employed, and what those ideas of God are, which particularly engage his attention, and ought to kindle his love, when God only is witness to his devotions, he will be ashamed of his shortcomings; and the more he sees, the more he will be humbled, and ready to conclude there are none like himself. He may perhaps suspect whether he ever believed in God at all. If those could believe how infinitely they are loved, and that they are but struggling with the very same difficulties thousands had been tried with
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before, who are now in glory, how would this encourage them in looking to him, who so loves them, for help in all their times of need!

As in many other cases, it is only the sincere Christian who is exercised with such fears: others neither are apprehensive of their ignorance, nor desire any more light or knowledge; therefore love not to examine into these things: But those who are tried with these fears should be on their guard, not to conclude they have never been savingly taught, because they find such remains of darkness; but to remember, only those lament this defect, whose eyes the Lord has opened. If they had not had eyes to see spiritually, they would not have been thus sensible of their ignorance.

Sometimes the Christian will find much difficulty in his mind what person to pray to. Satan (if permitted) will be very active at such a season, and tempt the believer to go by the light of fancy, and not by the word of God.

Waiting on the Lord, and praying for light and direction, is the path, in this difficulty, the believer should pursue; and he ought to call to mind, that as he could not possibly have seen his lost condition without divine teaching, so this kind of knowledge is a free gift of God, and is granted in the use of means.

In studying the word, he will find relief; for therein is set forth both the nature and object of prayer:—but to enlarge on this subject now, would not suit the design of this work; and I hope

hope (if spared) to write a treatise wholly on this subject, at no great distance from the present period.

However, this very difficulty is peculiar to a child of God: only they seek to worship God in spirit and in truth, and they are the only persons who follow on to know the Lord. An earnest desire to obtain, and to grow in the experimental knowledge of God the Father, as a God of love, and to have clear views of the person and merits of Christ, is an evidence the Lord is at work in such a soul.

Let such remember, He that hath promised to lead the blind by a way which they knew not, will, in his own time, bless and sanctify this difficulty to them.

If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God. We go to him sincerely, when we feel our wants.

All such fears are over-ruled, to cause the Christian see with his own eyes, and not take things on trust, or by what others say; which is a great advantage to the believer, and makes him better acquainted with the truth.

An unregenerate man may desire the knowledge of doctrines, that he may be able to converse sensibly about them; but no man who was not born of the Spirit, ever desired to know God.

Those who have got ideas of God as a God of grace, will desire to have more clear apprehensions of him as such, and of those Divine

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transactions which tend to impress the heart with the greatest things he ever did or said: in these they will, in a particular manner, desire to grow in the knowledge of.

Those do not only want to be saved, but also to be enabled to give that glory to the Great Saviour such should give who partake of these infinite things, and to glorify him in their bodies, souls and spirits, which are his. Therefore, all these complaints give the strongest proof of the soul being savingly illuminated.

Nothing is more evident, than that it may be truly said of men in general, they desire not the knowledge of the ways of God; and this is the real case with them, whether they are in public worship, or in private. On the contrary, the Christian is sensible, tho' he once was as the world are, that he is now of a different spirit. How different then must those be, who are so far from this frame, that though they are satisfied they do see into the system of doctrines, yet they find their minds in some measure like the apostle Paul, longing, if possible, to attain to the resurrection of the dead, *i. e.* to have as clear ideas of God and heavenly things as those will have after the resurrection!

Every Christian should learn to judge of himself by the word. Paul does not unchristian those who lived on milk, and could not endure strong meat; nor the Ephesians, whom he knew were greatly defective in the knowledge of Christ. A weak man must not say he is
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not alive, because he is not as strong as the strongest.

Having taken notice of the change made in the understanding by regeneration, I would, secondly, shew how those who are born of the Spirit are said to be made partakers of the Divine nature.

This is not by a participation of the Divine essence, which is incommunicable to any creature, nor is it by a personal union with the Divine nature; but those who were by nature children of wrath, and might be said to be of their father the devil on account of their natures, by this change are renewed in the spirit of their mind; and by the Holy Spirit, they have put upon them the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; therefore may be said to be partakers of a Divine nature. The nature such have before regeneration, is called sensual, carnal, and earthly: now being changed, they are, in their measure, spiritual, heavenly, and holy. They are partakers of a Divine nature, because they are partakers of the Spirit of God. The change is from darkness to light, from enmity to love, from sin to holiness, and from death to life. All metaphors are insufficient to set forth such an astonishing change.

All kinds of creatures have natures peculiar to themselves, and to the end for which they are designed of God: so there are a peculiar people of whom God may say, *This people*

have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise.

It is very evident, a higher degree of communion with God was intended to be granted to man in a state of grace, than ever was designed for man in his first state: for this fellowship and communion he is qualified by this change.

Adam was formed to hold fellowship with God as a creator, but not as a new covenant God, who is glorifying the riches of his grace on vessels of mercy. All the ideas a creature could have of God and his love in that state, were as nothing to that infinite love and grace so clearly manifested in the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ.

Our first parents had not that understanding before the fall, which the Holy Ghost now gives to Christians: it requires a different kind of knowledge to see into the designs of God as a God of grace, than it did merely to view him as the Author of nature. Being made partakers of the Divine nature, Christians are as really qualified and enabled to see the ways and works of a God of grace, as the natural eye capacitates a man to see the works of creation.

Sometimes the Christian will see more of God, by the Holy Spirit giving him a view of Christ, in one moment, than Adam could see in the whole creation.

The works of God which Adam saw, were something out of himself—not God himself: there-

therefore many learn the works of God, and are ignorant of God himself; for, by the works of creation, he cannot be known with such a knowledge as brings salvation to the soul of a sinner; though, doubtless, Adam had very clear conceptions of the Deity, and could see much of God in every work of his hand. That knowledge which is given to the believer in Christ, is a kind of knowledge as much superior to that which is merely natural, as the Creator is above the creation he spoke into existence; and this proves how highly those are favoured who are made partakers of it.

That view of God which the Holy Ghost gives to Christians, is nothing less than the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ—such a revelation of God himself as could not have been made to creatures, but in and by his person who is both God and man.

It is evident it was the design of Jehovah to make himself known in a superior manner (speaking after the manner of men) than it was possible for him to be known by any thing he could create. Millions of paradises are as nothing, when compared with the excellencies of our God, which shine in the face of Christ Jesus.

Those who have attained very extensive knowledge of the works of nature, before they had any discernment of spiritual things, are very sensible of this; for, though Adam in Pa-

radise had a mind nobly enlarged with the knowledge and love of the divine perfections, yet sin put out his eyes, and blindness and ignorance of God were the wretched legacy he bequeathed to all his sons and daughters. Such therefore, when they are renewed, find, that in their unregenerate state, they had no ideas of the designs of God in the incarnation and death of Christ; the greatest things that God himself ever intended to bring to pass, never entered their minds: and when men are ignorant of the chief things which concern the glory of God, they may be said indeed to be ignorant of God himself; nor had they any capacity suited to such sublime subjects, before they were made partakers of this Divine nature.

But, now, being made partakers of the Holy Spirit, they not only see into the riches of the glory of this mystery, but have a frame of soul suited to delight in it: *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.* 2 Cor. ii. 12. They are sensible, that no man, in his unregenerate state, can either understand in a saving manner, or delight in the study of this subject; he must first be created anew in Christ Jesus, before he is qualified for such an exercise: to the carnal, those things are as a root out of a dry ground.

If the Christian sees, that, by regeneration, he is not now merely in relation to God as a creature

creature to a Creator, but as a child to a father; and also that he is in such a manner connected with Christ, as may and ought to make him conclude, he is not brought into such an intimate relation to God for a small thing, but for eternal glory to God, as well as everlasting happiness to himself; and also to hold the most intimate communion with Jehovah in this world;—he will see a peculiar love inseparably connected with this relation, which is properly called the love of God in Christ Jesus; and therefore, those who are in this relation to God, must of consequence share of his infinite and immutable love. Being in the same relation with Christ himself, we cannot fail to be interested in that love which is suitable unto such a relation.

Few are aware how near to God such a change brings a man. Paul says, *We who were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, &c.* Eph. ii. 13, 19.

If the Christian could see himself, and the right he has to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, as a child of that family, and could see himself fully entitled to this by such a change, how much would it add to his comfort! he would see the way that our heavenly Father has now consecrated and opened, that his children may enter even into the holiest; which is a glorious proof how much higher fellowship is to

to be enjoyed by God now by those who are in this relation, than could have been in a mere created state; and in how much love those who are thus made children, ought to draw near to God.

Though there was nothing in God to discourage man in his near approaches to him when in a state of innocence, yet the Christian has such an encouragement as cannot be described; and though now a poor sinful creature, when he sees such an infinitely glorious remedy, and that its efficacy is the glory of Christ himself, he may boldly enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: the nature he is now a partaker of, will be content with nothing less; others, who have not this nature, will seek nothing higher than this world. God, in making him a partaker of such a nature, has given him an earnest that he is now a real heir of all spiritual things: *If children, then heirs, &c.*

What were all the encouragements in Paradise to that of beholding the Lord of the heavenly world, as not only having paid the full price for our sins, but always appearing in the presence of God for us! and not only so, but that he should consider us as brethren!

Joseph's brethren found it to be no small ground of encouragement, to see, that he who was Lord of all the treasures of Egypt, was a real brother: it was impossible they should overlook so pleasing a circumstance. But if
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our eyes were more opened, we should see infinitely more to encourage us than those brethren had: and we should see this in a far more encouraging light, if we saw more clearly the state we are brought into by regeneration. And were we more aware of the advantage of spiritual and heavenly knowledge, we should pray for it as fervently as Paul did, in Eph. i. 17, 18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, &c.*

No sensible man will enter into a relation, but with a design to act suitably to such a connection, whether it be as a master, father, husband, &c.

Will an infinitely wise God take us into such an intimate relation with himself, and not have that love to us which is proper to that relation? It is the peculiar glory of the God of all grace, to make such poor creatures as we are meet to be partakers of such inexpressible favours; not only to adopt us into his family, but to fit and qualify us for such an intimate relation to himself.

Was it possible for the Christian to see himself now, as he will in the world above, how would he be filled with wonder, both at the nature he now has, and the relation he is brought to! Could he now see the change
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made in him, and the infinite design of God in it, how would he triumph to find himself capacitated to hold fellowship with a God of grace! He would see this is what no unregenerate man in the world is qualified for: this would convince him, God would not thus have opened his eyes, and shewn him those things, but that he might delight himself in a God in covenant.

Many who are made partakers of such infinite privileges, yet have their minds so much beclouded that they cannot take that comfort which belongs to them; they know not the things which are so freely given them of God: and nothing but the witness of the Holy Spirit can remove their doubts, and bring to them the enjoyment of this divine consolation. Instead of delighting themselves with that glory which awaits them, and that they shall soon be holding an uninterrupted and eternal fellowship with Jehovah above, they fear being only fit companions for devils and damned spirits below. Thus many truly gracious persons pass much of their time groping in the dark: but this is chiefly owing to a defect in the understanding.

If the Christian could distinguish as satisfactorily between grace and nature, as a man conversant with money between good and bad coin, he would not be in this uncertainty. The Apostle says, *Know ye not that Christ is formed in you?* He would not have wrote this, if the
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Christian could not arrive at a positive assurance.

It is an infinite mercy, his interest in those glorious things does not depend upon his understanding: as his understanding was not the cause of his being brought into such a relation, so it is not of his continuing in it.

Isaac's being heir, was on account of being the son of Abraham; therefore, the moment he was born, he was as much the heir of Abraham as when grown up. But though his knowledge did not make him an heir, he was not in a capacity to have such comfort in so high a station, as when he understood in what manner and for what end he came into existence, and the great things he was born heir to. And for what an infinitely glorious end will the Christian see himself made a child of the family of heaven? to enjoy, not only the heavenly Canaan, but to enjoy a Covenant God to all eternity! And the more his mind is enlarged, the more will he be enabled to take in the things that are so freely given him of God.

David, at first, knew little of the great things God had in view for him, even when God had made him a man after his own heart. So the Christian, after his regeneration, often lives long with little knowledge of his interest in God. Great and infinite things are done for many, when they have no apprehension of it, even though they are already made partakers of these things.

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As it is evident to a demonstration, that knowledge is necessary to comfort, it is the greatest folly to neglect the means of obtaining it.

Go to a dying man destitute of this knowledge—could you give him assurance he is a child of God, you would give him more comfort than if you could make him heir of the whole world. Therefore, whatever tends to cast light on this important subject, must be of great advantage to the believer.

It is of no small advantage to take particular notice how much those who are thus made partakers of a Divine nature, differ from others who remain in an unregenerate state. That which is most agreeable to the Christian, is particularly hateful to a carnal man. In natural and lawful things, they may harmonize and agree; but in things spiritual, light and darkness cannot be more opposite.

If the renewed man meet some very zealous friend of Christ—to him he is as iron sharpening iron. He is refreshed with his spirit—it was not so once with himself, but now his very soul cleaves to such: he can say with David, *I am a companion of them that fear thee.*

If the unregenerate man meet such a one, it is wholly the reverse. His heart cannot unite with such—if, through education, he behaves with decency, his heart is far from him; he would be much more happy in his company,
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was he a carnal man like himself. This proves to a demonstration, how widely two such persons must differ, and what a great change must have taken place in one of those who so lately was of the very same spirit.

These evidences of our Christianity which we feel in our hearts, give us more satisfaction than those which are chiefly in the understanding: Such demonstrate the heart must be changed, and the nature evidently renewed. Every child of God will find this in himself; and if he takes particular notice of it, he will be as certain of it as of his own existence.

Those things which are common to all Christians, and only to those who are such, must assist the believer in the knowledge of himself; for, *as face answers to face in a glass, so the heart of man to man.*

No doubt Cain felt awfully when he saw Abel's affection in worship, and that his sacrifice was so evidently accepted: so the carnal professor has an awful antipathy to the very spirit and affection of a real Christian. This proves what an amazing difference grace makes in whomsoever it is, and how irreconcilable fallen nature is to the things of God.

It must be allowed there is a great difference in persons who have no grace. Naomi's daughters both discovered affection to their mother. Orpah respected her for her kindness, and the relation she stood in to her; but evidently had no regard to her as a lover of the true God.

This was the reason why she turned back, and went to her people and to her gods. The lovely and amiable conduct of some professors, obliges many to love them for their conduct, who hate their principles.

Those who are taught of God, will see, with a little attention, a real difference between that affection which is merely natural, and that which is spiritual.

We feel a great regard for some who are remarkable for their amiable qualifications; yet, knowing them to be ignorant of God, we cannot find that fellowship with them, or love to them, that we do to some who are far inferior in their natural tempers, but who fear God.

It is evident that Ruth's heart was renewed; she had lost all her regard for Pagan idolatry; she had not only affection for her mother, but for her mother's God. She could not bear the thought of being separated from the worship of the true God, nor the thought of losing sight of all his worshippers. No doubt Naomi had given them both the same advantages; but one is taken by Divine grace, the other left to follow her idol.

It is easy parting with a religion we are ignorant of, and have no communion with God in; but when any have been made to say, like David, *A day in thy courts is better than a thousand*, such will mourn like the crane, and chatter like the swallow, when deprived of the ordinances of God. Such are as surely blessed
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of the Lord, as ever Boaz blessed Ruth. *Ruth*
i. 12.

Some fear they are not made partakers of a new nature, because they feel such dreadful workings of sin and corruption. I advise such to read with particular attention, the seventh chapter of the epistle of Paul to the Romans. It was designed, no doubt, for the relief of such. If we had not such a description of the workings of sin, even in an apostle, many would have been sunk in despair. It is evident those who may even now stile themselves more than conquerors, must expect a very sharp war.

Sin shall not reign; but we have no promise it shall not rebel, but fair warnings to the contrary.

We judge of this change more by our warring with sin, than our deliverance from its attacks.

The Christian is described in Galatians, v. 17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* In a battle, few expect to do as they would.

Shall those then who are in this war, fear they are no soldiers, because they meet with such a conflict in themselves; this is the common lot of all who are engaged in this field of battle. What shall we see in the Shulamite, but the company of two armies—armies engaged! Could the believer see more distinctly those

very struggles with himself, which tend to fill him with distress and horror, it would help him to conclude himself a true soldier of Christ: he has not the least reason to conclude himself no soldier because the battle is hard.

As the Holy Spirit is not at all honoured by the carnal man, so he is only by the Christian as he grows in experience. He is insensible what help he has already had in this war with sin; and the longer he is in this war, the more he will feel the weakness of his reason; and that nothing can uphold him, short of the immediate assistance of the Holy Spirit. We, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body.

It is by such difficulties that the believer knows the Holy Spirit; by looking for help where it only can be had.

Some are afraid they cannot be made partakers of such a change, because the things of the world engage so much of their attention. Such should consider, they have to do with this world, as well as with heavenly things. Jacob, though an undoubted heir of glory, had his mind greatly harassed with the affairs of his family.

There are many whose situations are so distressing, that their minds are for the most part buried and sunk; and what with fear or care, and being altogether among those who are wholly ignorant of religion, they seem almost lost to themselves: these may be compared to
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creatures who are brought so near death, that you can scarce perceive life till they are a little revived by nourishment: like the Amalekite whom David found, who, after they had revived his spirits by food, could converse with them; so bring these poor harrassed souls under the word, and they are oftentimes so revived they even forget all their cares and sorrows.

As sin may be permitted to distress the believer, so the world at times and seasons in a more particular manner is permitted to bury him in its waves.

The Psalmist makes this heavy complaint: *My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me according unto thy word!*

It is by such difficulties that the means of grace are rendered so exceeding refreshing and dear to a child of God.

How often may the Christian adopt the words of the Psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 1. *O God! thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*

All these difficulties are so far from being arguments against the believer, they prove his nature is changed: and though the stream of the world runs violently, he cannot go down this stream like the world.

Many have been thrown into great darkness, by fearing, that had they been really made partakers of this divine nature, they should not feel such dreadful tempers. They read of the lion being

made a lamb, and perhaps see a great deal of this in some; but finding so much to the contrary in themselves, frequently conclude they are deceived. Such in particular ought to walk like those who carry gun-powder about them—watching on every hand.

Whatever has been the constitutional sin before regeneration, will harass the believer afterwards; for though there is a real change wrought on the man, it is never intimated such are made perfect by it. When these give way to their tempers, they often experience that the Holy Spirit is grieved; and this makes their fears rise very high.

There is no infirmity Satan can foil the Christian in, more than in this: anger throws reason itself out of doors; and as a drunken man is exposed to every snare, so are these when they give place to anger; it is giving place to the devil.

Some have far more difficulty with themselves than others. I have heard of one, of whom it was commonly said, he had grace enough for ten men, but not enough for himself.

We are exhorted to be angry and not sin, and particularly not to let the sun go down upon our wrath. We read of two gracious bishops who fell out and parted in great wrath; the elder sent to the other these words: *Sol ad occisum*, i. e. The sun is about to go down. This
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so moved the other, he went to him, and they were friends again.

It has been a humbling consideration to many, to find what great progress many of the heathens made in the improvement of this natural virtue, (for it is a natural virtue, and may be attained by men who never had any pretensions to grace).

We read of one Pericles, a philosopher, that met with a railing man, who in a most provoking manner railed on him a great part of a day, then followed him home to his door at night, abusing him. The philosopher never returned one angry word, but desired one of his servants with a lighted torch to light the growler home to his own house.

A man that conquers his spirit, does more than he that takes a city. If ignorance is the cause why a brother offends us, we ought to overlook it; if infirmity, to forget it; if malice, to aim at nothing less than blessing those who curse us. These sayings would not be hard, if our hearts were overflowing with the love of God.

Some naturally take fire at the least spark, and are blown up before they are aware of it: If Moses himself stood in need to be on his guard, much more do we.

The good emperor Theodosius commanded that no man should be punished who spoke against him; saying, that what was spoken lightly, he laughed at it; what spitefully, he pardoned;

pardoned; what was in anger, he pitied; and what was true, he was thankful for. Grace will in the issue mollify the most lion-like temper.

Let such as are distressed with this infirmity remember, the way to get the victory is not to sit down and suspect their state; but on the contrary, to go to God as children pleading for promised help. Many a child of God has wept in a corner, where no eye but God has been witness to his tears; when we thus condemn ourselves, it is evident we shall not be condemned with the world.

How many, after some grievous fall into passion, have wrestled with God, and not given over till they could pray for those who have despitefully used them!

Many have been greatly alarmed on finding themselves so exceedingly backward to go to God in private prayer, reasoning with themselves, How can I be a partaker of the Divine nature, and feel this ungrateful and wretched frame? How can this be consistent with love to God? Few now in glory but have known something of this; but those who never experienced an enlarged heart before God, must be ignorant of this objection: bringing a heart which is wholly carnal to God in religious duties, is much the same as bringing two persons together who have an aversion to each other. Such arguments must be brought which shall have weight with each party; the heart

heart being at enmity with God and all spiritual things, nothing but carnal considerations, which move his fear and dread, can have any influence with him.

But where there is real grace, though the frame be now very bad, and terrifies the believer, it is not like bringing a man to something that is altogether disagreeable to himself; he is persuaded that there is a pleasure in it which the whole world cannot yield; and though he has no disposition for it now, he views it in a quite different light to that of the worldly man, to whom it always is a burden: The unregenerate man never did expect any thing by such an exercise, but an escape from wrath: therefore he never is in any frame of mind for it, but when under some awful impression or other. The general bent of the soul, and not any particular frame or action, is that by which real grace can be known.

The seaman's compass may tofs in the storm; but when the wind ceases, it will not rest until it stands due north. 'Tis the art of the adversary to put us upon examining ourselves in the storm, when we should be better employed in crying to him who rules the raging of the waters; the want of knowledge in this situation, has made many fear they should sink to the bottom.

The formalist, who wants nothing but a form, is an entire stranger to these doubts and fears;

fears; neither the joys nor the sorrows of the Christian are known to him. If he fail in what he fancies he ought to do, he daubs again with his untemperèd mortar. But he who has known something of running in the ways of God with an enlarged heart, cannot rest with the performance of the duty, if the heart be not in it.

It requires more skill than most are possessed of, to discern real love in the heart to God, when all the arguments which can be arraigned will not influence the believer to go with pleasure to a throne of grace; oftentimes the more he struggles, the more he feels the force of that truth, *In my flesh dwelleth no good thing*. Our doubts cannot rise high when our hearts are enlarged; but when we are forced to say, *How to perform that which is good I find not*, Rom. vii. 18. then we are fully persuaded our being willing proves we have real grace: as it did to the Apostle; he kept his eye upon his will—To will, says he, is present with me. Such a will he knew he was a stranger to by nature.

After a long and tedious season, when every opportunity has but added to the burden, until hope itself is almost vanished, then to have a Bethel visit, how reviving! Now we are more than willing to enter into our closets: those who experience these dark and dreary seasons, will have such kind visits in their turns.

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All this proves, that a dry and barren frame of mind is not our choice, but our infirmity; such complaints evidence the soul to be alive, and that it has been made a partaker of the Divine nature.

It is not so easy as some imagine, to obtain that knowledge in the things of God which is requisite for solid consolation; and we are not to expect comfort, but in the use of means. If the people of God would take as much pains to obtain spiritual blessings, as worldly men do for their pleasure or gain, they would find the advantage of it, and every corner of the Christian Church would be filled with praise. One great cause of that luke-warm frame which is so common, is, the almost universal neglect of the means.

I come now to the *third* thing proposed, *i. e.* To shew why this great change is compared to a resurrection, or a raising us up again.

The different metaphors the Holy Ghost hath chosen to set forth this change, meet like rays of light in one focus, and tend to elucidate the subject; and this being so necessary a part of knowledge, it is an infinite mercy that so much light is thrown upon it in divine revelation.

It is compared to a resurrection, on this account:—In the resurrection there is the same body, but superior qualities: the body is without life and motion before the resurrection; so is the soul spiritually dead, and discovers no
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more of spiritual life towards the things of God, than the dead body does after food.

Adam, when he considered himself formed out of the dust, must adore that God who formed him, and see himself a surprising specimen of divine wisdom and power. This he would sooner discern than the love of such a Being; the works of nature are positive proofs of wisdom and power, but not of divine love. Many who have spent much time in the study of the works of nature, never had their thoughts one moment engaged about infinite love; but in this exertion of infinite power, love is particularly manifested: at the great day all shall be raised, but not all loved; yet the cause of this resurrection is love. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, &c.* Eph. ii. 4, 5.

The more the mind of the Christian is led to consider the greatness of that love which is the cause of so wonderful an exertion of divine power, the more he will see a necessity to adopt the language of the apostle Paul,—O the height and depth! &c. He may sooner see the truth and reality of such a wonderful change, than the infinite love which is the cause of it.

As the works of creation prove the being of a God; for without an infinite power, such a system could never have been brought into
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existence; so the means of grace, of themselves, could no more effect such a thing as the quickening of a soul, than the spices prepared by the women could raise the body of Jesus, or the taking away of the stone raise Lazarus from his grave: as neither Jordan nor the sea would have divided without an immediate exertion of divine power, so the hand of God was not more evident in those than in this work.

In this resurrection the soul is particularly intended, not the body: *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Eph. ii. 6. If we could discern the soul as distinctly as we do the body, and see the change made in it by the power of God, we should be struck with as much surprize as in seeing Lazarus come from his grave.

As Lazarus must have continued in the grave, had not a divine power been put forth for his resurrection, so must we, who are now raised, have continued dead in sin.

A dead body hath nothing in it to oppose, and is entirely passive; but the unregenerate soul is enmity itself: there is therefore, speaking after the manner of men, a greater power requisite to raise a soul to spiritual life, than a dead body to natural life; every faculty is opposite to it, the understanding blinded and prejudiced, the will stubborn and bent on vanity, and the heart as a cage full of unclean birds. If we had a clearer apprehension of the stub-

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bornness of our wills, and the enmity which is in our nature, we should be more surprized with that power and love which bring us from spiritual death to a real spiritual life, (which indeed is as real as our natural life, and which requires spiritual support as much as the body does natural), than we should be to see a dead body rise from the grave. Look at those who are dead in sin; they are not only destitute of spiritual life, but have a dreadful aversion to it. When you see such changed as evidently as the jailor, what but infinite love could make such a change? what but infinite power could effect it? Lazarus, when raised from the dead, might walk among the tombs with a peculiar feeling, and think, when among the dead, what himself was but the other day. We should take such walks every day, and never forget the hole from whence we have been digged.

If we see how dead we were, and in what a loathsome state we lay, it will fill us with wonder; and we shall say, What manner of love is this! We are brought from a death of the most awful kind, to a life so glorious no pen can describe; and yet how insensible are most people of it! They see it not in the glass of God's word; and if it is not seen in the light in which the word holds it out to us, we shall have a very shallow idea of it.

Our dead souls were made to hear the voice of the Son of God, and now we live. What infinite love and power in this voice! It came
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to us as the voice to Saul ; others looked on, but did not partake of the infinite favour. But should Saul have overlooked such distinguishing love, how ungrateful would it have been!

We were proper company for the dead before, now we are qualified to converse with the living : but an unregenerate man is no company to the people of God ; he has no eye to see either their pleasures or difficulties ; however nearly related in the bonds of nature, he is a total stranger both to their joys and complaints. Can we find this in ourselves, and form no judgment of our own state, though we differ as much from the carnal as the living from the dead ?

If this subject was more particularly noticed, should we not more frequently hear those words on the tongues of Christians : *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ;* 1 Pet. i. 3.—However, none can speak in this strain until the understanding be well informed ; a view of the infinite nature of this mercy, would move both the heart and tongue.

If this change were something of a common nature, as many temporal gifts are, then there might be some excuse for the little attention paid to it, though the least mercy calls for gratitude ; but being so great that the angels no sooner behold it than they are filled with joy,

we may be assured our being little moved with it, is owing to something which ought to be enquired into.

If the Christian gets one peep at the infinite and everlasting love which is the cause of such a change, how will it engage his thoughts, animate him in every duty, and support him in every difficulty! As Lazarus could not look on his being raised as a common favour, so should not we; but we ought to look on our being quickened together with Christ, as the highest pledge of being infinitely loved.

We shall perfectly see the design and the end of our being raised again at the general resurrection: but why do we not see this, as we might, if we were more engaged in the study of it? Much may be gathered by attending to the design God has in some things. Manoah put a wrong construction on the conduct of God, and said, We shall surely die! But his wife understood better, who told him, if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have received a burnt-offering at their hands, and shewn them such things as he had.

A man in distress of soul, rather thinks it is an intimation that God will damn him than save him; but one that has been long accustomed to see those changes, knows to the contrary.

In all the works of God's hands, something of his design may be seen: And ought it not
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to be more seen in this than in any of his common works? and would not a view of his design in this, animate, and be of continual advantage? Suppose the prodigal had understood the design of God in bringing him to himself, what a change would have taken place in his frame! how high would his joys have been raised! Had the woman at the well of Samaria, in the last moment of her conviction, seen the design of Christ, what a divine joy would she have felt!

Go to a man confined in prison for debt, or any capital crime; add to this, suppose his body full of sores: Could you shew this man, as in a mirror, his debts paid, his crime pardoned, his body perfectly cured, and himself made an heir of an immense fortune, and all this from a peculiar regard the king had for him—inform him the king had a fixed intention to make him the first nobleman in the kingdom—tell him he must come out of this prison, and converse with this king to the end of his life—how would such a man feel! But if a soul just called by grace, could discern what those see in glory, would not he behold infinitely more? He would consider a man so elevated with an earthly advancement, like Jonah, when rejoicing under his short-liv'd goard; while he would see himself heir of an immortal crown.

If we understood more fully the resurrection of Christ, and knew more how we are raised together with him, we should see more than

a pledge of all this in him who is the mark and prize of our high calling; and that our souls are as surely raised from spiritual death, as Christ is risen from the dead. What is that life we shall live with him who is the Lord of life in the upper world? Shall worldly men have such pleasure in their imaginary prospects, and shall we spend no time in beholding these infinite realities?

We are exhorted to set our affections on things above; but how shall we, if we neglect looking at these things by faith? how shall we obtain the end, if we neglect the means?

The soul is particularly intended in this resurrection. Could we see as great a difference between a soul spiritually dead, and one that is quickened together with Christ, as there is between a living and a dead body, there would be no room for doubting. In those who are regenerated, this difference would be more easily seen, if Christians were looking more at things in the light the Scripture holds them forth. The believer, on account of worldly difficulties, is bowed down; when he would rise, the world and its cares pull him down again; he cannot now see himself differ from carnal men: but even in this distressing case, there is a wide difference between one in this situation, that groans under the load, and is glad when the Lord now and then raises him a little above the world—and another who is in his element in
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the world, and who never knew any higher pleasure than in it. Life and death are not more opposite than these two. The believer himself may see he once knew nothing of these complaints; they prove he is quickened, and passed from death to life.

If this was more clearly seen, the Christian would be satisfied that distinguishing grace has made him a partaker of eternal life.

The greatness of this change is one cause why many Christians are so jealous about themselves. They think, had they been thus raised, they could not possibly have been so ignorant and insensible of it; therefore, its being described in this manner, has caused some Christians great uneasiness.

It is evident, a man cannot be so affected by a thing he understands not, as when he fully apprehends the nature of it.

In natural life, the understanding is not the first proof of life, no more than in spiritual life. Peter, when called, finding his own brother Simon, says, "We have found the Messiah!" but he learnt better afterwards, when our Lord informed him, *Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father.*

Yet he was truly called before his understanding was opened in such a manner as to see clearly what was done for him: those great joys which many have when they are in their first love, are not on account of the understanding being particularly

ticularly concerned in it; they are joys founded in sense, which are very uncertain.

Those mentioned by Christ, in the fifth of Matthew, though mourning, yet were blessed; they were raised from spiritual death, and now alive to God; but not apprehensive that they were blessed, and in a state of safety.

Had those seen what had really been done for them, they would have been filled with joy; and instead of being depressed with a spirit of heaviness, would have been covered with the garment of praise. So that all fears arising from this foundation, are groundless; and those who are thus harrassed with this fear, are Christians.

Fears, in general, are evidences both of grace and knowledge; a child which is born heir to an estate, which has something in the title that renders it not so certain as could be wished, feels no fear or care about it, till its reason begins to operate, and then it will be affected with such an uncertain situation.

The nature of many of our fears, arises from our discernment of the greatness and importance of things; therefore, those who have more knowledge than their cotemporaries, will have fears quite different from persons of a weak understanding.

When the understanding is enlarged to take in the nature of divine things, the fear then with the Christian is, These things are so infinitely great, how could God ever intend them
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for such a worm as me? Whereas the fear of one who cannot see half so far, only arises from some knowledge he has of the great sins he has committed, and he cannot yet see the glorious sufficiency in the blood of Christ to take them away.

If the Lord did not in a particular manner proportion our faith and ability to appropriate the things of God to ourselves, this kind of fear would always rise with our knowledge, and keep us on the brink of despair.

It will be seen in the issue, that this kind of trouble originates in the art and cunning of the adversary, who, while he can keep the mind thus engaged, prevents the Christian from looking for supplies.

This change is called, in the fourth place, a new heart. Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts; if the fountain be changed, it must be a great change; by having this new heart given, the Christian is capable of such feelings of sorrow and joy, as the world can know nothing of. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; Ezek. xxxvi. 26.*

This makes as real a difference between rational beings, as subsists between one species of creatures and another; how much did Paul differ from those Jews who remain blind!

As the brute can have no taste for the rational pleasures of the philosopher, so the carnal man

man cannot have any delight in what the renewed man finds his chief pleasures in: no improvement by education or learning can cause this change; it is God's prerogative to change the heart. The heart of stone and the heart of flesh differing so much, makes the work of God appear the more glorious.

If a man can with satisfaction come to this conclusion, that God has bestowed on him this infinite favour, he may be assured all other things will be given him. This gift cannot be alone. Those are blessed with all spiritual blessings, who are made partakers of it.

But as the principal doubts the Christian has, arise from those different frames he feels in his own heart, if this part of the subject is not attended to, it will be like permitting one leak in the vessel to remain unstopped, that will sink it in the sand.

That which has caused so many troublesome suspicions in the minds of many, has been the splendid professions of some who appeared to have been once changed, but have given sufficient proof they were never plants of the Heavenly Father's planting.

Many of these have evidently been as trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots: And some of those have had great gifts, and outrun many.

'Tis an undoubted truth, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked :
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yet, as current coin may be distinguished from false, so may this apparent change be from that which is genuine: pure gold is the only metal that will lose nothing by the fire; and true grace is that which alone will endure trial and temptation. Jehu made a great shew: but the honours of a kingdom soon made it appear he was not like David, who delighted in the worship of God; for he took no heed to walk in the ways of God.

In all these appearances, it will be found to be only the effect of force and fear, not of will and choice; nothing will bring a man to seek happiness in God in this world, but real grace: the splendid professor may soar aloft in the air; but, like the crow, he comes to the earth for his food; all his comforts spring from thence; the heart will follow after that from which its highest comfort comes.

The Evangelist mentions some: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest they were not all of us: 1 John, ii. 29.* When they were gone, and mixed like water with the common sea of this world, it was evident then to whom they belonged.

It appears from what John says, these never had an unction from the Holy One; their religion did not arise from any thing higher than human nature, worked upon by something external; they never had any real change; they never had
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the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit ; therefore they left those excellent ones of the earth, and preferred a present false happiness, in the way of sin, to all the glories of God's salvation, and comfort in conversing with the people of God. Shall those who cannot bear the idea of such conduct, fear they are like them, when the very thought of being separated from the people of God would be death to them ?

On this account, it is not to be expected that young Christians will have that solid, settled comfort, those have who have stood long in the way. They will be liable to fear being overturned by some temptation or other, at some future period : but after some time, when they have seen many draw back, they will be so far from being drawn away with such, that they will say with Peter, *To whom shall we go, but to thee ?* and feel their hearts cleave more and more to the ways of God. The coldness and lukewarmness of those who are drawing back, is far from gaining their approbation ; they flee from such, and find their hearts unite only with those who favour of the power of godliness. Ought we to expect ripe fruit from trees newly planted ? In grace, there is first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. There is so much of fear and dread oftentimes in the beginning, that the young Christian will fear there is no higher cause why he is religious.

A false professor may for a season be more intent on religion, and appear more dead to the

the world than a real Christian, and his heart be unchanged all the while.

Outward things may apparently cast the heart into a different mould, and the man be but like king Saul, who was made for a little while another man, but not a new man.

A covetous man in a dangerous disorder, especially in extreme pain, will part with his money to a physician or surgeon rather than lose his life or limb: but this is purely force, it is no change of heart; remove his pain, and his heart is as much towards his money as ever, and oftentimes more greedy of the world after than before.

So a man whose conscience is alarmed with an awful apprehension of judgment to come, while this continues, may part with his sins, which are dear to him; but take off the impression, he will follow his sins with more eagerness than before: which proves there was no real alteration in the disposition of the heart. It is but like preventing a stream of water for a while with a bank, and by and by it runs over the obstructions, and is more rapid than before: there is no renewing in the spirit of the mind; the cause is all external.

While Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; the effect was upon his conscience, his heart remained in the love of sin as much as before; yet his understanding and his reason took in so much of the truth of a judgment to

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come, as to terrify him, but not change him : he had no regard for Paul's master ; the cause of Christ was nothing to him ; he hoped more for Paul's money, than for an immortal crown with Christ.

Ahab, while the impression of Elijah's awful message lay upon his conscience, humbled himself, and walked softly ; but we do not find that he sought God's face like David—though terrified with the thought of deserved vengeance, he had not the least desire after the enjoyment of God's presence : in this the false and true professor always differ. Ahab's present comfort which he sought after, was in the indulgence of his sin : many stand in awe of God, who would enjoy themselves and their pleasures more, if they could banish all thoughts of God to a greater distance from them ; that light which they have got by being near God's altar, only makes them the more unhappy, and adds to their sin. All this tends to prove to the real Christian, that he is possessed of a superior principle : he may at times, through fear and unbelief, stand in awe of divine judgment ; yet it is the language of his heart, *Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* So far is he from acting the part of an Ahab, in hating God's servants, and going on from sin to sin, that his very soul cleaves to them who love the name of the Lord ; and he is never more in his element, than when his heart is warmed with their conversation.

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He does not, like Felix, send conviction away till a more seasonable opportunity ; his heart is bent upon the ways of God, and could not endure the thought of being debarred the company and converse of the people of God.

Much of that darkness most people complain of, is because they have not that knowledge of nature and grace which enables a Christian to see his own state : though their hearts are changed, and their wills renewed, and all this by the sovereign will of God who has made them willing, yet all their concern is, Oh that he were willing to save me ! They see their own willingness ; but see nothing of the cause why they are so desirous of enjoying salvation, when most around them are secure in sin. Let such look at the jailer. Imagine you heard him break out in this language, Oh that Christ were but willing to pardon so great an offender ! I have abused his servants, I have united with his enemies : Is there any hope for me ? The man's being thus affected and willing to be saved, is a positive proof he was one of those the Father had drawn : the cause of his coming to Christ was not in himself ; he would have remained as secure as any, had not the Holy Spirit been sent into his heart. Look at the examples in the word of God ; be as if you had been in company with Christ, when Mary Magdalene began to wash her Saviour's feet with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head ; suppose you had heard her plead like a criminal

for pardon, and had seen all the while that the Lord himself had given her that repenting frame, and that his infinite love was fixed on her; would you not have said, O woman, if thou didst but see, how might thy sorrow be turned into joy! It is love that is the cause why we see ourselves.

But distressed souls see not this; yet such feel they are willing to lay at Christ's feet, and say, If we perish, we will perish here: they neither expect salvation any where else, nor do they wish for it in any other.

The unregenerate man, whatever effect terror or conviction may have on him, will only comply with religion on account of something future, such as an escape from eternal punishment; he has no idea of the happiness the real Christian enjoys in religion, nor has he any desire after such happiness. These are like sailors in a storm, who will throw many things overboard, not on account of any dislike to them, but rather than that the vessel shall sink. So when poor carnal persons are alarmed, they will flee from the appearance of sin while the conviction continues; but their love to sin is the same—and, what is worse, their hatred to the ways of God is not removed by it. The believer may see himself far different from such as these: Sin is no longer his element; that which was once so sweet, is now his burden; above all things he desires to be free from it; he knows those are the only happy people, who
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have victory over sin. Could any one assure him he should overcome all sin, and never turn back to folly, it would be more than taking a thorn out of his foot, it would be a salvation above all salvations. He is sensible, that to live in sin, is incompatible with either comfort here, or glory hereafter.

How different these from those who only turn away from their sins for fear of hell! Many have taken such steps in their convictions, which they blush to hear of when they have joined their wicked companions again.

Others who go not so far as these, will, when their convictions go off, sit down in a form: such in general grow more greedy of the world than men in common are: most of those who are covetous in the extreme, have been persons who have had great convictions; sitting down with a form of religion, without the power of it, is the effect of an unsound conversion.

But the true Christian can no more sit down in a form, than a hungry man will be contented with seeing a well-spread table without tasting of the provision: he will follow on to know the Lord savingly; he will not fear so much returning back to sin, as being deceived, and taking something for regeneration that is not.

The false convert moves like some machine that has a weight or spring which is the cause of all its motion; take that off, and all the wheels are motionless. But he who is born of the Spirit, has a principle of life within himself.

It is possible for artists to imitate nature, both in shape and motion : but to give such an image life and appetite for food, can only be effected by Jehovah himself. Satan can imitate the work of God, but cannot give a man an appetite for spiritual food ; and as spiritual life is infinitely superior to natural, a God of grace can only be the author of it. If this be but as a grain of mustard seed, an almighty power implanted it there ; it shall grow, and be found to be eternal life ; all the arts and devices of the cunning adversary cannot destroy it.

Many have been greatly perplexed on account of the natural attainments of some men ; in some things, for which such are remarkable, they may outshine many Christians. Thus many of the Heathens have been conspicuous in their day, some among the Romans in particular, who excelled in being of a public spirit, in love to the commonwealth, in integrity and honesty. A Roman General having been taken captive by the Carthagenians, had liberty to return to Rome, on condition that he would attempt to persuade the Romans to peace ; and if he should fail, he pledged his honour to return again, and be stripped naked, and tormented to death. When he came to Rome, and consulted with some of the chief men, he found the terms would be incompatible with the interests of Rome. He went back, and chose to be put to death in the most dreadful manner, rather than
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that Rome should be injured by the sparing of his life.

The love of fame has done surprising things; and such things may be done without any principle of grace in the heart. Pride being the ruling principle in man, many who have been vile in some respects, have excelled in others.

So, in our days, many are famed for their humanity and integrity, who are as remarkable for their aversion to religion, in any form whatever; the generosity of such, springs not from any regard to God. Many of the chief enemies Christ has had, have been men remarkable for some natural virtue; yet have been as far from humility, faith, and concern for Christ's glory, as any upon the face of the earth. This proves the truth of Christ's words, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* But while such as these glory in something natural, they are as far from having any affections to heavenly things, as the most vile carnal men; they who cannot see their defects, will of course give them the preference. The world will love its own; nothing is more evident, than that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. The ruling motive in the hearts of such men, is altogether carnal, and not love to God: what they do, is not from any love to, or delight in him; as soon may water and fire agree, as these be of the same spirit with the people of God: the antipathy they have to his glorious way of saving sinners, proves to a demonstration,

demonstration, they know neither the Father nor the Son. Paul bore the Jews this testimony, that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; this is something more than those before mentioned, who had no regard to God at all: yet these were even greater enemies to redemption by Christ.

God has distinguished his own people from those: their spirit is as opposite as enmity and love. *He that loveth is born of God.* In these who are born of the Spirit, there is that humility, that hatred of sin, that approving of the way of salvation by grace, those affections to heavenly and spiritual things, which the others are total strangers to.

The motives by which men are actuated may be known, if particularly attended to. Herod did many things, and heard John with pleasure, but not from the least motive of love to God. Who could have thought he would have cut off the head of the preacher, rather than part with one sin? His motive could not be regard to God. Many also will appear to love ministers, who have only a natural affection for something in them which is agreeable. The Gospel may entertain some, as persons are pleased with those who can play well on an instrument; yet they have no sense of their need of Christ, nor desire fellowship with him.

The strong man armed sometimes keeps his goods in greater peace under the gospel than in the tavern. Many can be content, and fall asleep
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under the sound of it, who would not be so easy if they were to leave it altogether. Some of the most secure sinners in the world, therefore, are to be found sitting under the sound of the gospel.

The gospel sometimes makes a conquest of a man, as a tyrant overcomes a city, who comes against it with an army which cannot be driven away. The citizens are obliged to capitulate: they must submit to the laws of this new tyrant, though they hate him: they pay the contribution he lays on them, though with a grudge. But should he make a conquest of their hearts, with the greatest joy would they then welcome him as their king: they then do not only give the contribution, but their hearts also. The obedience which the unregenerate yield to Christ, is but as that to the tyrant; but those to whom a new heart is given, yield themselves as those who are alive from the dead:—so different it is when the heart is conquered by the grace of God. How does the soul welcome Christ as king? his people are made willing in the day of his power: the Christian can with greater satisfaction say he is willing, than he can venture to say he has true grace. In regeneration, the old king is dethroned, and the King of kings welcomed, with all his wholesome laws and new form of government.

The Christian does not continue a loyal subject because he fears his neck if he rebels, but because he loves his king, and wishes no other
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might reign over him. It is not so with the hypocrite, who is only restrained from sin by fear of punishment.

There is a great difference between a man who keeps from stealing, because he fears hanging, and another who loves his neighbour as himself, and whom it would hurt to make his fellow-creatures unhappy.

Many keep from sin, not out of regard to God or man, but from fear of punishment. The Christian, with a little enquiry, may find in himself a superior motive; and it is by such things we may judge whether we are only restrained from sin, or renewed.

It is one thing to follow religion merely out of regard to our safety, and as a covert from the storm of divine wrath—and another when a man follows it for the comfort he finds in it, and because it is agreeable to God.

All, at their first setting out, follow religion for safety; but only those who are renewed will continue to follow it, because nothing under the sun can yield them such comfort. They will feel in themselves such a disposition, that was there neither heaven nor hell, they could not live as the world, and chuse the way of sin for their comfort here. This is a positive proof of the heart being changed. Those very things the Christian promised himself the most pleasure in before his calling, are now the things he flees from; and above all things, he desires a complete deliverance from them.

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It is wholly different with those whose hearts are not changed : like Balaam, they long for the wages of unrighteousness. He would rather have had power and liberty from God to have cursed all the seed of Abraham, than to have missed the opportunity of being made rich. He was held back by restraint, not by renewing grace. Restraint gives pain: the yoke is far from being easy. Renewing grace helps the Christian so to do and go through things with satisfaction and pleasant submission to God, that no carnal man can attain to.

The Christian is not grieved at his being prevented from sinning, but can from his heart bless God for it, and can pray to be always kept in the path of duty. That grace which keeps him from sin, he values as much as that which enlarges his heart in duty.

The general bent of the heart, and not any particular action, is that by which the heart should be known. The seaman's needle may tofs in the storm ; but when the wind ceases, it will not rest until it stands north.

The art of the enemy is to put us upon trying ourselves in the midst of a storm, when we can be much better employed in crying to him *who can speak the most dreadful storm into a perfect calm.*

Many, by having been tempted to try themselves thus, have concluded they should sink to the bottom ; for he that tempts them to try themselves in such a situation, will not fail to help

help them to such a gloomy conclusion. Sometimes the believer, in a great trial, will be tempted to conclude he has not true faith, because he sinks in the time of difficulty: he imagines that those who have genuine faith, never are thus. Such forget how Jacob trembled when he thought of meeting Esau, though he had so small a space of time before such a deliverance was wrought for him by God's immediate interposing in his behalf; which made him tell Laban, *Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me now away empty.* And this was not all; but he had a vision of angels encamping round him for his safeguard; yet the first trial, though an imaginary one, fills him with dread and terror. Some of the most eminent have in times of difficulty proved to a demonstration the truth of these words, *Without me ye can do nothing.* Why then should any fear their faith is not of the right kind, because they feel such weakness?

The very things which God in great love permits to try our faith, and increase it, oftentimes terrify us, and make us conclude we never had any. The very sense of our unbelief at those times, is an evidence we do believe, and that we will be content with no faith but that which is genuine. An extensive knowledge how others have been in difficulties, even those who were the most eminent in faith, would be of great advantage to the Christian:
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it would not only help him to act with caution, but to watch against his own weakness, and keep him from being so much cast down when he feels it.

Sometimes the Christian will find he goes about religious duties in a very bad frame: he drags on in the way, but with no pleasure. This makes him fear he never had any real love in his heart to God.

It requires more skill than most are possessed of, to see real love in the heart to God, when all the arguments that can be arranged will not influence the believer to go with pleasure to a throne of grace; and oftentimes the more he tries to get his heart into a proper frame, the more he feels the force of that truth, *In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*

Our doubts never rise high when our hearts are in an enlarged frame, but when we are obliged to say, Rom. vii. 18. *How to perform that which is good I find not.* Thus we are persuaded, our very being willing, proves we have grace.

After a long and dark season, when every opportunity is added to our burden, until almost hope itself is vanished, then to have a Bethel visit, how reviving! Now we are more than willing to enter into our closets. Those who experience dark and dreary seasons, have such kind visits in their turns.

All this proves, that a dry and barren frame of mind is not our choice, but our infirmity; and

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infirmities

infirmities prove the person to be alive, as well as in health ; for those who are dead, feel no infirmities—they have no complaints. Great numbers of professors are not only strangers to all these fears and joys, but even to all kind of self-examination.

Those who have no saving acquaintance with God, who have no higher idea of religion than that of a form when they are exercised in it, bless themselves, and are at ease : But the sincere soul must have the Spirit of God to bear witness with his spirit ; nothing short of this can content him—nothing appears so awful to him, as the form without the power.

Though the true Christian finds a great difficulty with the frame of his heart in duty, yet it is not that kind of difficulty a carnal man finds : the one is concerned to have his heart in a right frame ; the other has to reason with himself, to keep him from neglecting the duty altogether. The arguments which have any influence with an unregenerate man must be carnal, and not spiritual.

Should any argue that this is incompatible with true grace, and say that such are under the dominion of sin, they speak against the experience of some of the most eminent in the church of God. God has, in infinite compassion to his poor backsliding children, left upon record, the falls of some who were remarkable in their day, that none in after-ages might despair. The knowledge of experimental religion is as
necessary

necessary as the knowledge of doctrinal, for our support. Those who have a very scanty acquaintance with the experience of Christians in general, will be apt to put a wrong construction on many things in their own.

The young Christian is like a young soldier, soon thrown into consternation. He imagines, if he is infinitely loved, and changed in such a wonderful manner, nothing will hinder his mounting up to heaven; he thinks of flying as on eagles wings; and as he is ignorant of the road which millions have gone before himself, every difficulty makes him dread he is wrong, and has missed the right way: whereas, if he had more knowledge of the way, and was better acquainted with the footsteps of the flock, he would be confirmed in his persuasion that he is right, and spend more time in communion with that God of grace who has brought him so far; and in the room of saying or fearing he is no Christian, he would be wondering at the power of Divine grace, that such a heart as his should be kept amidst such innumerable temptations.

Sin often begins like Elijah's cloud, little at first; but it grows fast, and for the most part makes its entrance by specious pretences. Few are so happy as to keep that advice in mind, *Shun the appearance of evil*. Some sins are to be fled from, some to be fought with. Skill is as necessary in the spiritual war, as in the natural; and there is as much need of being

on our guard in our happy seasons, as in our dark ones, and especially when nothing outward distresses us. Outward troubles are like salt; many are mercifully preserved by them. How near to God did David keep in his difficulties! but, in ease and prosperity, how soon he fell!

It is the art of the enemy, first to tempt to smaller sins, and then greater, and after that to despair, by representing such conduct as a positive proof of no grace. Those that would not go down into the pit of despondency, must keep from the first step of the ladder.

There are subjects who have not so much as a wish to change their king; they would not, on any account, rise in rebellion against him; yet have temptations to act contrary to the laws of the realm. So, there are many that are for Christ's kingly government, and would not have him otherwise than king; yet, through the deceitfulness of the heart, are tempted to many things which are contrary to his laws and government, and which they are sensible will endanger their comforts.

Our natures are but in part renewed. There would be no warfare, if Satan could find nothing in us. It will not be for our advantage to conclude, because we find ourselves in danger of taking liberty, that we are not real subjects, or have no proper love to Christ being king. Why did the Psalmist complain? *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them*

them not have dominion over me! Why did Paul complain so feelingly? O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. vii. 24. The reason was, v. 23. I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members.

It is not the way to get victory over sin, to suspect we are under its dominion; or, because we are sensible of our weakness, to conclude we have no grace. We cannot look to Christ confidently for help, while we suspect ourselves as not being his true subjects. In that case, he is not our king: but the very idea of his being our king, will have the same effect on us, which the alliance between Israel and the Gibeonites had; they found the enemy too numerous, and too strong: where shall they fly for succour? They would not have been thus attacked, had they been at peace with their Heathen neighbours: the war was owing to their having made peace with Israel. So, most of our difficulties are on account of our having broke off from the Heathen, and united with Christ as our king: where shall we go for help, but to the camp where he resides?

The very things which cause the believer's suspicions, are those which have been matter of complaint from the beginning. We should keep in mind, that the whole of our nature was opposite to his laws and government. Is it not an infinite mercy we have found such a change?

To whom shall we look, but to him who is *the author and finisher of faith*, for the rest? As sure as Joshua came by the command of God to the help of Gibeon, will our great Joshua step in for our deliverance.

Our being frightened with sin, will do us no harm; but let us remember, the hail-stones did not slay all the enemies; some were left to try them: so we must expect, whatever help is granted, whatever victory gained, we must keep on our armour, and keep up our guard. The length of the war will teach us how to fight: no fear but we shall go wiser off the field than we came on; we shall learn the ingratitude and unbelief that lodges in our hearts. All our days, we shall find a necessity to plead promises. How many have pleaded this promise who are now in heaven! *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Rom. vi. 14. *You shall not be tempted above what ye are able to bear.*

Those who have joined hands with Christ, have broke the league with sin; and the struggles they meet with, will make them stand more in awe of it, and desire more to have deliverance from it. It drives them more and more to the great remedy, and convinces them of the necessity of looking out of themselves. They see it an infinite mercy that God has not only laid help on one who is mighty to take away sin by a perfect atonement, but ordained
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one to help them in the war, who can deliver them from foes both without and within.

When the prophet informed the king of Israel of the place where the Assyrians would come down, he knew how to keep from the snare laid for him; and when we learn the common workings of the heart, we adhere to this scripture, *He that trusts his own heart, is a fool.* All that understand ground, know that the fatness of the ground adds to the greatness of the crop; so the soil of human nature would bring forth a plentiful crop of all kinds of sin, if grace did not prevent it.

The more human nature is indulged with outward things, the faster they grow: for, as it produces nothing but weeds, the summer's sun makes them spring apace; but the nipping frost keeps them down.

We know little of what God is doing for us in some of our sharpest winter-seasons. The Psalmist felt what he said, Ps. cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.*

It is to be lamented, that those very ideas of God which tend to excite our obedience, and kindle our love, when we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit, should at other times, through the art of Satan, and the deceitfulness of our hearts, encourage us to presumptuous sins. The enemy understands how to turn our very mercies into snares; and our deceitful
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hearts are as ready to comply, if left to themselves, as he is to tempt.

A wife who has an indulgent husband, would not change for the world, nor take any step that would cause a divorce; yet having a strong inclination to something which is disagreeable to him, she indulges her fancy at the expence of hazarding his displeasure: she would not take such a step, was he churlish and austere; it is his kindness she presumes upon. So, Christians are apt to abuse that kindness in God, which should above all things constrain them to please him. But the heart will be found by experience to act more deceitfully towards God, than towards men; for if we were sensible our fellow-creatures saw the very motions of our hearts, we should be far more attentive to those who laid us under great obligations than we are. And how should we blush before them, when we knew they beheld in us a heart ready to reward them evil for good! Indeed those who would do this, are of the basest kind of mortals; yet how much more are we grateful to our fellow-creatures than to God! Could we see one another's hearts, we should stand in need of ten thousand times more of a forgiving spirit than we have; and yet we believe God sees, and that all things are naked and open before him. If the real Christian looks at himself in this part of the Looking-Glass, I shall wonder if he find not something of his own features. Who could have imagined Jonah would have
returned

returned such an answer to God? Jonah iv. 2. *For I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.* Gracious, not only to pardon Nineveh, but to pardon Jonah.

Had Jonah been fully persuaded his sin could not have been pardoned, but that the consequence would have been eternal torment, he would not have presumed to disobey the Divine command. Though in many cases love will constrain us to do things, and in such a frame of spirit, that fear would not; yet fear will keep us from some sins our natures are prone to: and as it is often the case that fear restrains us when love has little influence over us, we may see a propriety in that promise, *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* He who needs no information of what is in man, has abounded towards us in wisdom and prudence; whether he keep us near to him by love or fear, it is an infinite mercy to us.

Those who have only a form, can tell what it is to be restrained by fear, but never felt what it was to be constrained by love: but however the Christian may bewail the ingratitude of his heart, yet he has experienced those times, when, like David, he would not have cut off the skirt of a Saul; and is always grieved with himself, when he finds that the chief motive which keeps him from sin is fear.

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It often is the case with the believer, that, through sloth, or by being buried in the world, he has neglected the means of grace; therefore the Lord, as a fatherly chastisement for his sin, leaves those very corruptions to rise again, which he once thought would never have given him any more trouble; his deceitful heart not being under an immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, he has to call up conscience to assist him; and if the Lord is not particularly gracious, he falls, and the backslider in heart is filled with his own ways. Those who carry gun-powder about with them, should keep from the fire, and beware of grieving the Holy Spirit. When his influences are quenched by our neglect, though strong like Sampson when assisted by them, we are as weak as broken reeds: none will believe the depth of wickedness there is in every heart, but those who have had long experience of it.

When unregenerate men arrive at great knowledge of the theory of religion, having no love to God, and what fear they have being only taught by the precepts of men; these, when they draw back, run to greater lengths in sin than those who have no knowledge, and most evidently turn the grace of God, or more properly the doctrines of grace, into licentiousness.

God has his eye upon the heart; the most splendid actions are nothing to him, without the heart. Love is the principal thing in all our obedience:

obedience: a slave may obey his master's commands punctually; but a son, who has a strong affection to his father, and does the same things out of love, gives a quite different kind of pleasure to him who is both master and father. Those who are sons, notwithstanding all their weakness and imperfections, have a spirit different from all others; such find a pleasure in obedience, which the carnal man is wholly ignorant of. When God has taken away the heart of stone, and given a heart of flesh, whatever difference temptations or infirmities may make in that man for a time, the habitual spirit will be that of a son: his religion is not merely to keep him from hell; but, as one that belongs to Heaven's family, he cannot join the enemies of it, nor hate his Heavenly Father—Christ is no root out of a dry ground to him.

Obedying from a child-like or filial principle, and merely from conscience, makes a very material difference. King Saul conformed to the worship of God—it was his interest; but never with that affection David did: there is no such thing as doing evangelical duties with a gospel spirit, if the heart be not changed; the chief and principal thing is not there—LOVE: How does the sincere Christian lothe himself, when going through duties perhaps others applaud and commend, while a sensibility of the want of this love makes him abhor himself in the eyes of him who sees the heart:

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The struggles such a one feels with his unrenewed part, neither alter his judgment, nor change the bent of his will towards the things of God: the sheep which falls into the mire, has not its nature at all changed by it, nor will it lie there. All this proves, that true religion, which is the effect of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, differs from all the natural religion in the world. The Christian may sometimes be like a man when rowing against the stream; he may, in some currents, work hard, and get little forward: but should he give over rowing altogether, he would go down the stream; his utmost exertions seem but to keep him from being driven back. The formalist will wonder and be surprized to hear the believer cry out so earnestly for help; he is wholly a stranger to this war: the difficulty within is the chief trouble the Christian has; the formalist feels nothing of this, therefore he is not a fit companion for the tried soul.

That which often makes all these things so trying, is the painful uncertainty the Christian is in by these struggles. Is this the way? have I my face Zion-ward? if I am a Christian, why am I thus?—which proves to demonstration, how valuable knowledge is, and that no means ought to be neglected for the obtaining of it. A full persuasion of being one who shall overcome, would banish his fears, and fill him with courage; yea, to adopt the Apostle's language,

guage, I am more than a conqueror, through him that hath loved me.

The numbers who are in this situation, and perhaps no one hears one complaint from them, far exceed those who are comfortable: this would not be the case, if the believer understood his own experience. In churches where there are few who have real experience, and nothing of the dealings of God mentioned from months' end to months' end, young persons who are really called by grace, often continue for many years in a disconsolate frame: the little relief they now and then find in the means of grace, is swept away as to their feeling; and not understanding in what state they are, they dread opening their mouths to any: and nothing is more common than for such to be very timorous, and to stand in awe of those they suppose to be grown in grace. Those also who are more experienced, frequently neglect the younger; this is oftentimes owing to a lukewarm spirit in themselves: this failure is almost universal in decaying churches; whereas in those churches where the Lord is at work, there is a watching for the first appearance of grace in young persons, and a pleasure in exhorting and encouraging them.

One great advantage that attends meetings for free conversation, is this, the variety that naturally arises from persons of different ages and circumstances: the Christian does not only

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meet with something suitable to his own case, but he finds those who are the most eminent, and advanced far in the Christian life, have not travelled that smooth road he imagined. Though we take no pleasure in the difficulties of our fellow-travellers, yet finding they are at times in the same exercises that we ourselves experience, it affords no small encouragement, not only to young travellers, but to the oldest, and gives them information how to deport themselves when they are brought into great and sore trials. Persuade a Christian, that those very things which God permits are only for the trial of his faith, and that they are only such as God has in all ages exercised his children with, you will remove from his heart a great load.

I remember a tradesman, who had gone on for some time in the ways of God, but being wholly ignorant what the people of God experienced, lived for the most part in a perplexed frame of mind. I wished him to attend with me at a meeting where about fifteen persons met for free conversation. He appeared very uneasy at my asking him, thinking himself unfit to be among the people of God: I obtained a promise he would go with me, on condition he should not be asked one single question. After the company had met and conversed together a considerable time, two of the oldest in the company were mentioning, very familiarly, what little pleasure they had found
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in private prayer for a long time, and that they were merely dragged to it by conscience, and found nothing of comfort in it, but a miserable hard and wandering frame. He appeared to me much affected with the conversation of these two; and after they had conversed some time together, he spoke of himself to them, to this effect: "I thought such as you had been like angels; I never imagined your hearts had been so backward, and so hard; I find you are as bad as myself." He then went on in a series of particulars which entertained the company most delightfully, and from that period had more just ideas of Christianity. Had he not lived near Christians, he might have been many years in a low and disconsolate frame. Few are aware of the disadvantage of a recluse and reserved spirit, and how useful those are whose conversation is savoury.

Because some such meetings have been abused, many think themselves sufficiently excused in the neglect of every thing of the kind: but will any man think the worse of a trade, because some men have abused it? When great gain has been gotten by it, men are not soon driven from temporal advantages. Men whose natural frames lead them into a recluse way, so that scarce one word drops from them in any company, ought to remember, that that which is pleasing to God, ought to be considered more than that which is merely suited to our own tempers. *Then they that feared*

the Lord, spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord. Mal. iii. 16, 17.

The force of these words are not easily evaded. Where Christianity has flourished most, this has always been practised, and as universally neglected where it has declined. If young Christians were accustomed to it from their first setting out, it would be of great advantage to them. That which has been a great means of relief to timorous persons, is finding there is a real difference between natural and supernatural qualities. The utmost that human nature can attain to, is but natural; but those gracious influences which real Christians experience, are spiritual, and of a different kind from any thing that men find in themselves by nature. The operations of the Holy Spirit differ not only in degree, but in kind, and are of a nature more excellent than any finite mind can comprehend.

Grace being a new kind of principle, the exercises of it will also be found to be new; and though we see not perfectly how this wonderful change was brought about, yet the effects of it are something the person himself feels; and also others, who are only spectators, may discern something different in such a man, to what is in any natural man. The believer does not only see a value in spiritual things, but he
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has a nature to feel how much superior they are to the greatest things under the sun ; he can behold the most exalted character as nothing, if the person has not grace. He can prefer the situation of a Lazarus to that of a Dives. This is that principle which was in those mentioned in *Heb. xi.* and which was the cause why they confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims here below. By this they were distinguished by God himself from all carnal men in that day, on which account God declared himself *not ashamed to be called their God.*

Those who have wrote on this subject say, that there are no new faculties brought into the soul by regeneration ; but as that which is merely natural is something which the finite understanding cannot comprehend, much more is this. Our time is far better spent in looking at the glory of this change, and proving ourselves to be made partakers of it, than in asking questions which neither men nor angels can resolve. It is evident such as are regenerate in every age of the world, are men of the same spirit, love the same things, tread in the same steps, and evidently appear to be the only persons formed for God, and preparing for his service above.

We first live the life of a plant, then a life of sense, and are some time before we live the life of reason: but when we are created anew in Christ Jesus, we live a spiritual life, and are

spiritually dead till then; so that the wisest natural man in the world, whatever qualifications he has attained, is spiritually dead, and is no more possessed of spiritual qualities than any other carnal man. This has caused some to say, that the Christian has one life more than the natural man. This is evident: we have not only that which Adam lost, but something superior to what belonged to that state Adam was in when perfect; which qualifies us to hold a different communion with God, and makes that fellowship as much our delight, as worldly things delight the men of the world; and not being partakers of this life, they can no more take delight in the things of God, than those who are in their graves.

The believer has a foundation laid in his soul for a new kind of exercise, different to what man had in his created state; and this not only in the understanding, but in the heart and disposition. Though he feel his unworthiness and inability, yet he claims a higher relation to God than ever was intended for man in his first state: he has the spirit of adoption, whereby he can cry, *Abba, Father!* and being now in so near a relation to Him who is in an infinitely higher relation to God than Adam was, and he being the First-born among many brethren, and Lord of all, exalts all his joint heirs, and brings them into such a relation to God as could not have taken place in any other way than by a real union with him who is God-man.

Different

Different relations call for different exercises; and those who are brought into high connections, if they are qualified for them, will find themselves employed in a different manner to what they were before. Thus David, when brought into the relation to his people as their king, must now conduct himself as a king. Thus also Esther, when made queen. So the believer will find he is not only brought into this high station, but peculiarly qualified for it: his heart is disposed for this communion and fellowship, in such a manner as is new to himself: he knew nothing of this formerly; and the more he is made to understand himself, and the high relation he is brought into, he will wonder at the infinite love which is manifested in bringing him into such a relation to God; and he will earnestly desire to think, speak and act in a manner worthy of his high vocation.

It is one thing for the Spirit of God to assist the natural qualities of a man, and another to give a new spiritual principle. Balaam had no new principle: it was such an influence of the Holy Spirit, that when it left him, there was nothing in him more than what was in any other natural man. It appears to have been the same with that in king Saul: he prophesied for a short season; tho' we never find he had any principle of love to God, but lived like other carnal men. The saving work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is different from this.

Noble

Noble and excellent principles are the effects of his operations on them; and these not transitory and fleeting, but habitual and abiding. There is always, and every moment, that quality in them, which may be said to be born of the Spirit.

The understanding is so far enlightened in the knowledge of God, that the Christian not only loves God, because he finds himself distinguished by him, but beholds that in God which at times makes him say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

This is wholly different from that knowledge which puffeth up. It moulds the believer into that very spirit so often described in the word: he is in his frame of spirit as a little child. That haughty, hardy spirit, which is so visible in carnal men, and was once in himself, is now removed. A little child may lead him; he has a humble and a contrite spirit: he desires now to walk humbly with God: he is at the utmost distance from boasting: he sees the ignorance of those that boast of their works—is sensible they are blind, and build on the sand. This humble child-like frame of mind is as peculiar to the Christian, as hardness and pride to the natural man: in it there is a sweet humility, that is beyond all the art of hypocrites to put on; whenever they attempt to imitate it, it is soon seen. How did David feel when he went and sat in the house of God, and said, *Who am I,*
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and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Some are ready to complain of their wicked hearts; and their complaints are as easily borne as they are made, being so far from real humility that they are only the effects of hypocrisy and pride. How different is the spirit of those who are sincere! They cannot glory in their humility, nor are they fishing for praise when they complain; but fear, more than esteem, the praise of others. These will not treat their fellow-creatures with a masterly air, but with a pleasing sweetness; and they particularly cleave to such as are clothed with humility; and though they know themselves to have made progress in religion, they feel the impression of those words, *Not unto us, not unto us!*

It is common for such to think, if others had enjoyed their advantages and experience, they would have made a better use of them. Christians look on their attainments as little, and their imperfections many; and the good they may have been instrumental in doing, as small to what it ought to have been. They see the outside of other Christians, but they feel their own inside; and not a little thing will persuade them, that the hearts of others are as bad as their own. When God builds, he lays a low foundation, that the house may stand. The fallow ground is all plowed up where the seed grows well.

Heady

Heady horses soonest tire; but *the path of the just will shine more and more unto the perfect day.* Bernard used to say, Humility was the preserver of Virtue. The Saints are clothed with this garment; but it was never yet known that a hypocrite would so much as put it on.

Believer, learn to read thy own heart in the hearts of those who have been the most eminent for piety upon the earth—As face answers to face in a glass, so does the language of these to thy heart.

Having found, by enlarging on this subject, that it would be impossible for me to go through those various objections which are so common to the Christian, I could not think of leaving off here, on account of the comfort of those for whom this piece is more particularly intended. I therefore find myself necessitated to print a Second Part, to be bound up with this, which I hope to have ready for the press very soon.

Lest any should imagine I am directing Christians to look wholly into themselves, I would have such to consider, that a knowledge of ourselves by examination, and full assurance of our calling, will never prevent us from looking out of ourselves, but greatly assist us in fetching all supplies from Christ; for, by being sensible of our interest in such a glorious Saviour, we shall be particularly encouraged to fly to him in all times of need.

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I would wish to refer any fearful and timorous soul, to a piece I wrote in the Second Number of my CHRISTIAN'S MAGAZINE, on Job, xxix. 2. *Oh that I were as in months past!* And in the Third Number, on Isaiah, l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?* Also in the Fourth and Fifth Numbers, on that remarkable darkness the Psalmist endured, which is described in the former part of the 77th Psalm.

It has been particularly satisfactory to me, that by the means of the CHRISTIAN'S MAGAZINE, such numbers of Christians have been both quickened and comforted; and I hope to make it my particular care, that the future Numbers shall continue to contain the most experimental, entertaining, and instructing matter.

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